



Literacy Cubed programme evaluation report

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Executive Summary

This report presents findings from an evaluation conducted by the UCL Institute of Education (IOE) of a pilot Family Literacy Programme carried out as part of the “Literacy Cubed: Focus on Roma Families” project. A summary evaluation report is also available; see <http://www.lit3-project.eu/outcomes/>.

The Literacy Cubed (LIT3) project sought to promote family literacy (FL) in Roma communities as a tool for raising the attainment level of Roma children in general education and improving their health. The Family Literacy programme was piloted in three locations – Podgorica, Montenegro; Cluj-Napoca, Romania; and Dolny Kubin, Slovakia – between June and August 2014. The evaluation focused on the programme’s effectiveness at: 1) encouraging programme participation amongst the target group, and 2) achieving programme outcomes. In the first category, the evaluation focused on recruitment, attendance, learning hours and programme completion. In the second, the evaluation centred on three outcome measures: improving children’s reading skills; improving children’s attitude to reading; and improving adults’ confidence with regard to helping their children learn.

Programme participants

In Podgorica, Montenegro, participating families reside in Konik Camp, a refugee settlement established for Roma fleeing the Kosovo War in 1999. In Cluj-Napoca, Romania, two different Roma populations participated in the programme: one group of families were extremely impoverished, and lived on the local landfill. A second group of families, while still of low socio-economic status, were relatively better off, and lived in the community. Generally speaking, the Dolny Kubin (Slovakian) Roma have higher socio-economic status and education levels than the Roma in Cluj-Napoca and Podgorica.

Recruitment, attendance and engagement

Across the three countries as a whole, Literacy Cubed sought to recruit 48 children and 72 adults. While all three countries exceeded their targets for the recruitment of children, Romania and Slovakia failed to recruit the target number of adults. In Montenegro, by contrast, there were no difficulties in recruiting adults. The Montenegrin experience highlights the importance of well-established working relationships: in contrast to Romania and Slovakia, programme staff in Montenegro had many years of experience working with the local Roma community.

Each workshop was three hours long, yielding a total of 48 possible learning hours per person. Participants were considered to have completed Literacy Cubed if they achieved at least 24 learning hours. Children’s course completion rates differed significantly across countries, ranging from 56% in Romania to 91% in Montenegro. Amongst adults, attendance was high in Montenegro but low in Romania and Slovakia.

Programme engagement

Trainers delivering Literacy Cubed were asked to rate child and adult levels of engagement in the initiative at the start and end of the programme. Ratings were on a five-point scale, with 1 indicating very low engagement and 5 indicating very high engagement. Limiting the sample to the 76 pupils for whom we had ratings at both points in time, all three countries showed significant increases in child engagement over the duration of the programme. Excluding the children for whom we had initial engagement scores but did not have Week 8 scores did not change our figures, either for the initial assessment or the final one. This suggests that pupils with lower engagement at the start of the programme were no more likely to drop out than those with higher engagement. The figure below illustrates the perceived shift in child engagement between the start and end of the Literacy Cubed.

Programme outcomes

In addition to facilitating high levels of engagement during the programme, Literacy Cubed sought to achieve improvements on three outcome measures:

- i. Improving children's reading skills
- ii. Improving children's attitude to reading
- iii. Improving parents' and grandparents' confidence with regard to helping their children learn.

Objective 1: Improving children's reading skills

Children's reading skills were rated by Literacy Cubed trainers at the start and end of the programme. Ratings were on a five-point scale, with 1 indicating very low skills and 5 indicating very high skills. In assessing perceived change in children's reading skills over the duration of the programme, we include data only for the 75 pupils for whom we have initial and final trainer assessments.

Trainers perceived a marked increase in pupil reading ability: 0.85 points, or nearly a full level. This difference was statistically significant ($p=0.000$, 95% confidence interval 0.736-0.971). A key factor was the number of new words children had learned, and which they were able to demonstrate through their ever-growing "Wordbanks" (collections of newly learned words built up over the course of the programme). Children's reading skills, as assessed by programme trainers, shifted markedly towards the positive over the duration of the programme.

Objective 2: Improving children's attitude to reading

At the start and end of the programme, children were asked to rate their enjoyment of reading on a 3-point scale, with 1 meaning a negative attitude to reading, 2 meaning a neutral attitude and 3 signifying a positive attitude. Of the 89 children who initially enrolled on Literacy Cubed, we have Week 1 and 8 data for 68. Amongst

those pupils, the mean initial reading attitude score was 2.71, while the mean score at the end of the programme was 2.94. This difference was statistically significant ($p=.000$, 95% confidence interval 0.132 - 0.339). These figures include 52 pupils who rated their initial reading attitude as high at the start of the programme (i.e. a score of 3), and who thus could not demonstrate improvement using our metric. (Future evaluations of programmes of this type may wish to reduce this limitation by using a wider-ranging metric, e.g. a 1-10 scale.)

Objective 3: Improving adults' confidence in helping their children learn

One of the key objectives of Literacy Cubed was to improve Roma parents' and grandparents' confidence with regard to helping their children learn. Amongst the 30 adults for whom we have confidence data from the start and end of the course, the mean confidence score in Week 1 was 2.0. In Week 8, those adults' mean confidence score was 2.13. This difference was not statistically significant.

Conclusions and implications

This evaluation focused on the Literacy Cubed's effectiveness at encouraging programme participation amongst Roma families, and achieving three overarching programme outcomes: improving children's reading skills; improving children's attitude to reading; and improving adults' confidence with regard to helping their children learn.

While recruitment of children was successful in all three countries, recruitment of adults was highly resource intensive and delivered fewer participants than expected in Romania and Slovakia. In these two countries, even when adults were recruited onto the programme, they were unlikely to achieve sufficient learning hours for course completion. In Montenegro, in contrast, recruitment was straightforward and adult attendance was high. The key factor influencing this difference between Montenegro and the other two countries appears to be the Montenegrin programme staff's long-standing working relationships with the local Roma community.

Looking at the factors shaping recruitment, three key issues stand out. Practitioners and/or policymakers seeking to establish a family literacy programme targeted at Roma communities would appear to require, at a minimum (and in order of importance):

1. Well-established working relationships with the local Roma community
2. Good working relations with the organisations supporting them
3. A targeted recruitment strategy.

In addition, recruitment and attendance may benefit from a lack of other viable opportunities for Roma adults. As Montenegrin staff observed, many local Roma had

“nothing better to do” with their time; in contrast, some adults in Romania worked, either in formal or informal employment.

Programmes would also likely benefit from more realistic ambitions regarding adult participation. A ratio of 1.5 adults per child seems overly ambitious. A 1 to 1 ratio would be more realistic, particularly given Roma gender norms.

With regard to programme outcomes, the evaluation did find evidence of improvements in children’s reading skills. Even if these gains are only context-specific, i.e. specific to the materials used in the Literacy Cubed workshops, these improvements are meaningful, particularly given these Roma children’s general lack of involvement in educational activities outside of the school year (and school day). The Literacy Cubed programme appeared to be very engaging for children and some adults. Amongst children, it appeared to heighten their already positive attitude towards reading, particularly reading for pleasure in a social context. However, due to the low number of adults who completed Literacy Cubed, we do not have sufficient evidence to judge the programme’s overall impact on adults’ confidence.

1. Introduction

This report presents findings from an evaluation by UCL Institute of Education (IOE) of a pilot Family Literacy Programme carried out as part of the “Literacy Cubed: Focus on Roma Families” project. A summary evaluation report is also available; see <http://www.lit3-project.eu/outcomes/>. The Literacy Cubed (LIT3) project aimed to promote family literacy (FL) (reading and health literacy) in Roma communities as a tool for raising the attainment level of Roma children in general education and improving their health. The Family Literacy programme was piloted in three locations – Podgorica, Montenegro; Cluj-Napoca, Romania; and Dolny Kubin, Slovakia – between June and August 2014.¹

The wider LIT3 project had three objectives:

1. To develop and field test a coherent FL programme targeting 3 generations
2. To develop an evidence-based European policy for FL
3. To engage key stakeholders in developing local strategies for implementing FL policy and programmes.

This IOE evaluation assessed the effectiveness of the Literacy Cubed Family Literacy programme: Objective 1 above. The evaluation focused on the programme’s effectiveness at: a) encouraging programme participation amongst the target group, and b) achieving programme outcomes. In the first category, the evaluation focused on recruitment, attendance, learning hours and programme completion. In the second, the evaluation centred on three outcome measures: improving children’s reading skills; improving children’s attitude to reading; and improving adults’ confidence with regard to helping their children learn.

In addition to these outcome measures, the evaluation also included a focus on selected programme inputs and processes, such as the perceived effectiveness of the curriculum and teaching materials.

1.1 Context

LIT3 was developed by a partnership of organisations from three countries:

- Montenegro: The Pedagogical Center of Montenegro (PCMNE)
- Romania: The Asociatia Learn and Vision (ALV); Consortiul International LSDGC

¹ Following completion of the planned programme, an additional element was added: home visits to a small number of Roma families. These home visits sought to address difficulties recruiting adults in Romania and Slovakia (see Chapter 4 re recruitment). As these home visits were not planned for in the evaluation protocol, and were by nature much shorter than the classroom-based programme, it was not feasible to collect relevant and comparable home visit data. Therefore, this report focuses on the originally planned programme. For more information about the home visits, see the full project report at <http://www.lit3-project.eu/outcomes/>.

- Slovakia: Orava Association for Democratic Education.

Needs Analysis

The family literacy programme was delivered by experienced local teachers working with these three organisations, supported by volunteers (see Chapter 3). Prior to programme development, a Needs Analysis was conducted. Like the evaluation itself (see Appendix 1: Methodology), the Needs Analysis utilised a “cascaded model” in which the IOE evaluation team developed data collection instruments, trained local stakeholders in their use, and then synthesised and analysed the locally collected data. In the Needs Analysis stage, these local data were complemented by an English-language review of international literature on Roma needs, strengths and interests (conducted by IOE), and national-language reviews of research, evaluations and policy reports in Montenegrin, Romanian and Slovakian (conducted by local programme stakeholders, using instruments developed by IOE). At the local level, Needs Analysis data were not collected by programme teachers, but rather by other programme staff with research experience. For a more extensive discussion of the Needs Analysis methodology, see Appendix 1 of this report, and the full Needs Analysis report, which is available at <http://www.lit3-project.eu/outcomes/>.

Target populations

There is an extensive literature on the difficulties faced by Europe’s Roma populations (see e.g. the series of reports, “Equal Access to Quality Education for Roma” produced by Open Society’s EU Monitoring and Advocacy Programme [EUMAP]², and reports by the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe [OSCE]³, UNICEF⁴, the Roma Education Fund⁵). These difficulties manifest themselves across numerous interrelated domains, including education and health. In Montenegro, Romania and Slovakia, Roma schoolchildren typically have limited access to quality education and experience limited enrolment, drop-out, early school leaving, segregation from the mainstream children, discrimination in education, low educational attainment, and poor literacy. These outcomes, many of which are intergenerationally repeated, contribute to the Roma people’s continued social marginalization and poverty. In response, Montenegro, Romania and Slovakia each developed National Action Plans during the Decade for Roma Inclusion (2005-2014). In these plans, education was listed as a priority domain. However, while there have been efforts under these plans to improve child and adult literacy separately, there have been few efforts at intergenerational programmes. Literacy Cubed sought to address this gap by piloting a three-generation family literacy programme. While this programme did seek to improve child and adult literacy skills, its primary objective

² For EUMAP reports see: <http://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/reports/equal-access-quality-education-roma-vol-1> and <http://www.opensocietyfoundations.org/reports/equal-access-quality-education-roma-vol-2>

³ For example: <http://www.osce.org/odihr/107406>

⁴ For example: http://www.unicef.org/ceecis/070305-Subregional_Study_Roma_Children.pdf

⁵ See: <http://www.romaeducationfund.hu/publications>

was to facilitate the engagement of Roma parents and grandparents in children's learning activities.

The following sections provide overviews of the local conditions for the three target populations. As these sections make clear, the three local contexts differ markedly, with participating families consisting of: refugee camp dwellers (Montenegro); families living on a local landfill (one of the two Romanian populations), and families living in the local community (Slovakia and the second Romanian population).

Montenegro (Podgorica)

The families participating in Literacy Cubed reside in Konik Camp, a refugee settlement established for Roma fleeing the Kosovo War in 1999. The children participating in Literacy Cubed have lived in this camp their entire lives.

Housing conditions in Konik Camp are very poor. Homes are small – generally 3m x 6m – and lack toilets. No homes have a water supply, and many lack electricity. Space is extremely limited, and is allocated to families based on the number of family members (roughly three square metres per person). The small size of homes and the generally large size of Roma families means that there is little to no space for reading or doing homework.

In addition to poor housing conditions, Roma families in Podgorica suffer from very low education levels. Roma parents generally have at most an elementary school education, and even in these cases they lack certificates or qualifications that could be shown to potential employers. Furthermore, as the majority of the local Roma population are refugees from Kosovo, they typically lack paperwork documenting their citizenship. This undocumented status presents a range of problems, including limited access to healthcare and an inability to be legally employed.

According to stakeholders working with local Roma, most of the contact between the families and schools is performed through the work of Roma coordinators, who collaborate closely with school pedagogues. Roma parents are expected to bring their children to a meeting point to be taken to school, but most of them fail to do so, so the Roma coordinators collect children from home to home. In the Needs Analysis, Roma coordinators noted that there have been isolated initiatives aimed at improving parents' ability and willingness to support their children's education. For example, a Roma Education Fund (REF) programme sought to develop parenting competencies through introducing mothers to the education system: giving them guidance on how to enrol their children, how to support their educational development, and how to more generally improve of the quality of their own and their children's lives.

Romania (Cluj-Napoca)

Romania has the largest population of Roma in Europe, with an official count at the 2011 Census of 621,573 Roma, making up 3.1% of the country's total population.

Census data from 2002 show the poverty rate for Roma people in Romania is almost three times the national average. A 2011 survey conducted by the United Nations Development Programme and the World Bank (2012) reported that enrolment in preschool of Roma children was low: 37% of 3-5-year-old Roma children were enrolled compared to a national average of 77%. The survey also found that completion of upper secondary education of Roma was very low: 12% of males and 6% of females. Roma children frequently suffer ethnic discrimination in Romanian schools, including placement in segregated schools, which are characterised by poor infrastructures, a shortage of educational materials and high percentages of unqualified teachers.

In Cluj-Napoca, two different Roma populations participated in the programme: one group of families were extremely impoverished, and lived on the local landfill. A second group of families, while still of low socio-economic status, were relatively better off, and lived in the community.

Slovakia (Dolny Kubin)

The 2011 United Nations Development Programme and the World Bank report (World Bank, 2012) found that, in Slovakia, enrolment in preschool of Roma children was low: 24% of 3-5 year old Roma children were enrolled compared to a national average of 70%. Generally speaking, however, the Dolny Kubin Roma have higher socio-economic status and education levels than the Roma in Cluj-Napoca and Podgorica. For example, all of the Slovakian families participating in Literacy Cubed lived in the community. However, many were unemployed, or did only seasonal or subsidised labour, and Roma adults in Dolny Kubin tend to have limited education and poor literacy skills.

Impacts of family disadvantage on children's educational experiences and outcomes

There is much evidence that parents suffering socio-economic disadvantage are less likely to provide adequate educational support for their children (see e.g. Carpentieri et al, 2011, for a summary of research in this area). Researchers in a number of countries have highlighted a range of socio-economic factors which influence the quality of support – both educational and more broadly – that parents give their children. On average, socio-economically disadvantaged parents are less likely to read with their children; when they do, they are less likely to use effective strategies for encouraging a love of reading (Bus and van Ijzendoorn, 1995). Parents who are poor readers themselves – whether through lack of education or difficulties with a new language – may lack the confidence to read with their children.

In most cases, socio-economically-related differences in parent-child literacy practices are not the result of limited ambitions, but of limited skills or awareness. Many parents continue to believe that education is a job for teachers, not families. In a Europe-wide study of family literacy initiatives (Carpentieri et al, 2011), one mother

was quoted as wondering: “Why didn’t anyone tell us how important it is to read with our kids when they are only small?” However, as that same study notes, telling parents *what* they should do is insufficient without also teaching them *how* to do it, and getting them in the *habit* of doing it.

Family Literacy programmes

Family Literacy programmes seek to address these issues by helping parents develop the skills, attitudes and practices needed to successfully support their child’s educational development. An underlying assumption of FL programmes is that parents with poor literacy skills exacerbate the educational difficulties of their children, and so reaching both generations with educational programmes is seen as a way of breaking this cycle of disadvantage (Desforges and Abouchaar, 2003). In this regard, FL programmes are an excellent example of “joined-up” policy thinking, in which it is understood that literacy problems have a wide range of causes and consequences, and cannot be addressed uni-directionally. They may also be an efficient use of resources. Carpentieri and colleagues (2011) concluded that FL programmes are relatively inexpensive, both in absolute terms and with regard to opportunity cost: because they often occur outside school hours, family literacy programmes typically do not compete with in-school programmes for learning and teaching time. This makes their benefits “additional to” instead of “in place of” formal education. Their relative effectiveness should be assessed accordingly.

There have been a small number of Randomised Controlled Trials (RCTs) of family literacy programmes, and a smaller but still useful number of meta-analyses synthesising the results of these and other studies. Summarising these meta-analyses, van Steensel *et al.* (2012: 37) found a “generally positive... non-trivial” impact of such programmes. While effect sizes differed, almost all the studies reviewed by van Steensel and colleagues found statistically significant effects of FL programmes on child literacy development. Carpentieri *et al.* (2011) drew a similar conclusion, and suggested that such programmes achieved impacts across a broad range of inter-related areas, both cognitive and non-cognitive. FL programmes appear to improve child skills in the short term, but – perhaps more importantly – also appear to improve parent and child attitudes, motivations and practices over the long term, with ongoing positive implications for educational outcomes. These non-cognitive impacts may be particularly important in families in which parents have limited and/or negative experiences of formal education. As summarised by Carpentieri *et al.* (2011), evidence from a number of countries suggests that while parents in these families typically have high hopes for their children’s educational success, they have limited understanding of how to act on these ambitions, in terms of providing educational support, whether cognitive or more generally. The more general parenting strategies that support educational success have been termed “good at-home parenting” (Desforges and Abouchaar, 2003). A number of family literacy programmes have sought to help parents develop their education-specific

practices and attitudes, while also developing more general parenting strategies that have been shown to positively influence child development.

1.2 About the Literacy Cubed pilot

A key aim of the Literacy Cubed pilot was to provide evidence on the potential feasibility and effectiveness of family literacy programmes targeted at Roma populations. As detailed above, the Roma populations differed greatly across the three pilot locations; thus, one of the challenges of the pilot was to produce a programme that met the different needs of these three populations.

The programme was delivered in a workshop-style, with a large amount of interactive and hands-on activities. At each programme site, there were 16 three-hour workshops spread over an eight week period (two workshops per week). This equates to 48 hours of programme time at each site (six hours per week). In Slovakia there was one family literacy class. In Romania there were two, based on geographical area: one for families living in the community, and one for families living on a local landfill. Although all participating families in Montenegro lived in the Kolnik refugee camp, there were two classes: one centred on children who would soon be entering Year 1, and the other for children about to enter Year 2.

The programme's activities and objectives can be understood in terms of four interrelated stages:

- *Stage 1: Development.* This first stage centred on the creation of an appropriate curriculum and learning materials, and also involved the engagement of key local stakeholders in each community.
- *Stage 2: Recruitment.* This stage involved recruitment of families, and of the volunteers who would support programme implementation.
- *Stage 3: Implementation.* As part of the implementation stage, Literacy Cubed sought to achieve a number of objectives related to participants' knowledge, skills, attitudes and practices.
- *Stage 4: Long-term objectives.* The completion of Stage 3 marked the end of the activities on the FL pilot. However, those activities sought to have longer-term impacts (Stage 4) on the skills, attitudes and practices focused on in Stage 3. These longer term impacts include improving Roma adults' educational support strategies, thereby improving Roma children's opportunities and attainment.

1.3 Evaluation design and methods

Evaluation indicators were discussed and agreed at a seminar held in Cluj-Napoca prior to programme development. This seminar was attended by the evaluation team, programme developers and programme trainers. (For more information please see Appendix 1: Methodology).

An inevitable challenge facing evaluators of short programmes targeted at disadvantaged participants is the question of what should be measured. In discussions with programme staff, it was agreed that “the evaluation tail should not wag the programme dog” – that is, while outcome measures would be collected in a rigorous manner, the choice of measures would be sensitive to programme context and objectives. In particular, it was agreed that standardised testing would be avoided, as this was likely to alienate potential participants and would run counter to the programme’s emphasis on learning as an enjoyable activity. More generally, it was agreed that the overarching objective of Literacy Cubed was to positively influence child and parent practices and attitudes; these non-cognitive outcomes were seen as particularly important to the achievement of the longer term goal of encouraging ongoing parental support for and involvement in Roma children’s education.

Data collection pro forma were developed by the evaluation team and distributed to programme staff. Data collection took place during the family workshops, using observers who were not involved in the teaching or production of the family literacy programme. Each piloting partner collected relevant data and sent this to the IOE evaluators. Quantitative data were then transferred into an SPSS 22 for analysis.

Indicators were:

- number of Roma primary school children enrolled;
- number of Roma primary school children who finish the programme;
- number of Roma primary school children’s parents/carers enrolled;
- number of Roma primary school children’s parents/carers who finish the programme;
- number of Roma primary school children’s grandparents enrolled;
- number of Roma primary school children’s grandparents who finish the programme;
- level of child literacy skills at the beginning and end of programme;
- child attitudes to reading at the beginning and end of the programme;
- adult confidence at helping children with learning, at the beginning and end of the programme;
- number of volunteers involved;
- number of reading buddies;
- number of learning hours per child;
- number of learning hours per adult;
- total learning hours for both groups;
- quality of reading materials;
- quality of teaching;
- degree of health literacy infused into programme.

The full evaluation methodology is detailed in Appendix 1.

1.4 Report structure

This evaluation report is divided into five main sections:

- Chapter 2 presents demographic and other background information about programme participants, including data on children's skills and motivations, and information about their Home Learning Environments.
- Chapter 3 centres on programme inputs and processes, e.g. curriculum and materials. Rather than attempting to measure the quality of these programme components against normative criteria, the evaluation focuses on programme staff's perspectives on these components.
- Chapter 4 focuses on participants' level of engagement with Literacy Cubed, presenting data on programme recruitment, attendance, learning hours and course completion/drop out.
- Chapter 5 presents findings on programme outcomes, including impacts on reading attitudes and skills. Chapters 2-5 each conclude with a discussion key findings and messages.
- Chapter 6 provides an overarching discussion of these findings and messages, and concludes with a discussion of potential implications for policy and practice.

2. Programme participants

This chapter provides demographic and other background information on the Family Literacy programme participants, including attitudinal information related to educational outcomes.

2.1 Participant demographics

Children

Literacy Cubed aimed to enrol 48 primary school children across the three countries: 24 in Romania and 12 in each of Montenegro and Slovakia. In this aim, the programme was highly successful and far exceeded its target, enrolling a total of 89 children across the three countries: 21 in Montenegro, 50 in Romania and 18 in Slovakia.

In Montenegro, there were two classes: one consisting of 11 children in Year 2 at the local primary school (aged 8-10), and another consisting of seven children in Year 1 (aged 7-8). In Slovakia, 18 children enrolled, and were all placed in one class. These children ranged in age from 5 to 10. In Romania, there were four classes, spread over two different schools. These four classes comprised of 7, 21, 10 and 12 children. The first class consisted primarily of children living on the local landfill, but also included some children living in an ethnically Roma area of the local community. Class 2 consisted entirely of children living on the local landfill. Classes 3 and 4 consisted entirely of children living in an ethnically Roma area of the local community.

Across the three countries as a whole, 57% of child enrollees were female. Children ranged in age from 5 to 12. The mean age of participating children was 8 years, 8 months. In Montenegro and Slovakia, the mean age of enrolled pupils was 8 years, 6 months. In Romania, the mean age was 8 years, 10 months.

Table 1: Number and gender of child participants

	Male	Female	Total
Montenegro	10 (48%)	11 (52%)	21
Romania	18 (36%)	32 (64%)	50
Slovakia	10 (56%)	8 (44%)	18
Total	38 (43%)	51 (57%)	89

Adults

Literacy Cubed aimed to enrol 72 adults (36 in Romania and 18 in both Montenegro and Slovakia), or 1.5 adults per child. This proved to be a highly optimistic target. In total, 54 adults enrolled on Literacy Cubed, giving a ratio of 0.6 adults per child. A typical enrolment pattern was for one female adult (usually a mother) to enrol along with two children. There were 19 adult enrolees in Montenegro, 25 in Romania and 10 in Slovakia. Of these 54 adults, only one, a Romanian father, was male. Mothers accounted for 83% of all participating adults, with grandmothers accounting for 11%. There was also one aunt and one older sister.

Most participating adults (65%) had only one child in the programme. 33% adults had two children in the programme, and one adult had three children enrolled. In one case, an older sister served as a younger sibling's adult.

Adults ranged in age from 18 to 65, with a mean age of 34. Most adults were in their 20s or 30s: 21 adults were aged 21-30, and 16 were aged 31-40. Five adults were aged 50+.

The difficulties programme developers reported in recruiting and retaining parents, grandparents and other adults are analysed in Chapter 4.

2.2 Children's reading skills

Amongst other objectives, Literacy Cubed sought to improve children's reading skills. These skills were assessed at the start of the programme, and again at the end. This section focuses on measures at the start of the programme. Chapter 5 looks at change over time.

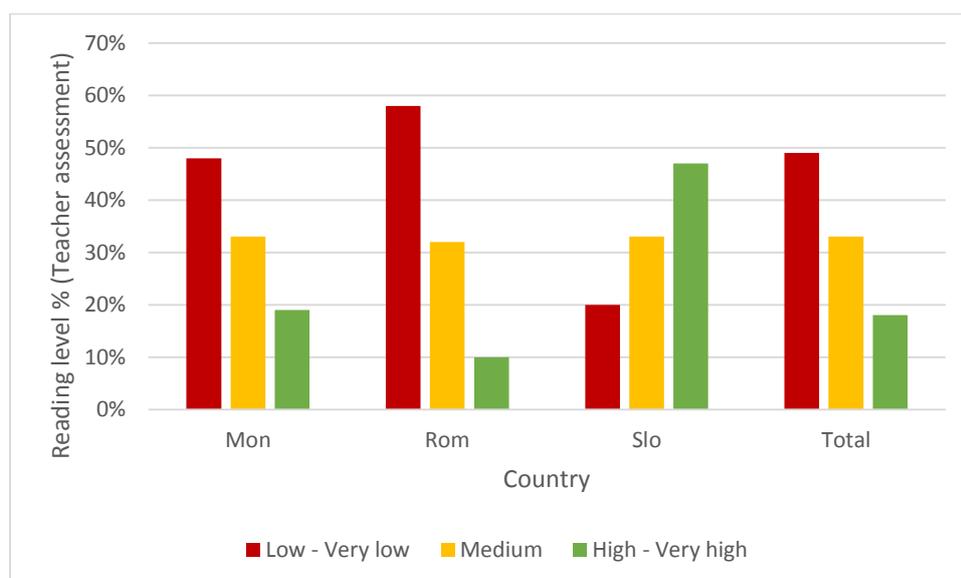
Classroom teacher ratings

Prior to the start of the programme, school teachers were asked to rate their pupils' reading skills. These ratings were informal: teachers did not administer a standardised reading test to the children, but were instead asked to use their own judgement.

Teachers were asked to categorise pupils as having one of five reading levels: very low (1 point), low (2), medium (3), high (4), or very high (5 points). Across all three countries as a whole, just under half of enrolees (49%) were rated by their teachers as having a low or very low reading level. One third (33%) were rated as having a medium reading level, with the remaining 18% considered to have a high or very high reading level. Figure 1 illustrates these ratings for each country individually (the first three columns) and overall (the Total column)⁶.

⁶ Throughout this report, lower ratings are shown in red, medium in amber and higher rankings in green.

Figure 1: Children's reading levels, as rated by classroom teachers prior to LIT3



In Slovakia, just under half (47%) of children were rated by their classroom teachers as having a high or very high reading level. In Montenegro and Romania, teachers were more likely to rate children's reading skills as medium, low or very low. In all countries, these informal assessments were based on comparisons with other pupils in the children's school class. This adds an extra layer of subjectivity to the ratings.

Literacy Cubed programme trainer ratings

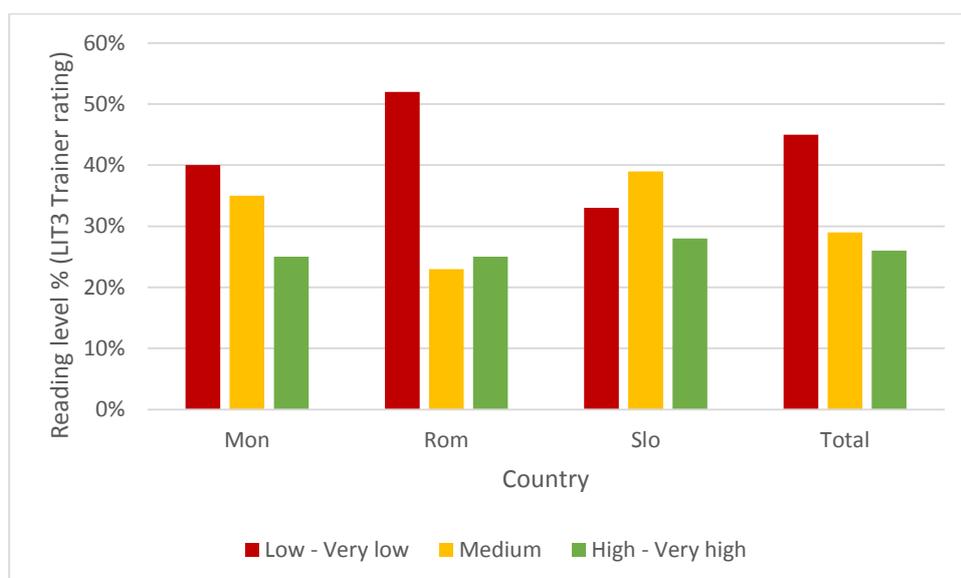
Literacy Cubed programme trainers were also asked to assess children's reading skills. As with the classroom teacher rating, this informal assessment was based on the trainers' perceptions, rather than a standardised test. It was felt that even a short test would be off-putting for pupils, and incongruent with the character of the programme. The same five-point scale (very low to very high) was used. Column 2 of Table 2 shows initial pupil reading scores in all three countries, based on Literacy Cubed trainer assessments. For comparison's sake, column 3 shows classroom teachers' ratings. There is good correlation between teacher and trainer ratings in Montenegro and Romania. It is unclear why classroom teachers in Slovakia rated the pupils' reading skills much higher than programme trainers did.

Table 2: Children's mean reading skills (1-5 scale; 1=very low, 5=very high)

	LIT3 trainer rating	Classroom teacher rating
Montenegro	2.70	2.57
Romania	2.59	2.42
Slovakia	2.72	3.27
Total	2.65	2.60

Figure 2 shows the distribution of pupil reading levels across the three countries, as assessed by programme trainers at the start of Literacy Cubed.

Figure 2: Child reading levels at programme start, as assessed by programme trainers



2.3 Children's attitudes to reading

In addition to data gathered from classroom teachers and programme trainers, data were also collected from the children themselves. In particular, children's attitudes to reading were assessed. This was done by presenting the children with three symbols – a smiley face, a frowning face, and a neutral (neither smiling nor frowning) face. Children were asked to choose the face that most accurately represented how they felt about reading.

The mean reading attitude score for children in each country, at the start of the programme, were:

- Montenegro 3.00
- Romania 2.83
- Slovakia 1.94
- Overall 2.68

As this is a three-point scale, 1 equals a negative attitude to reading, 2 equals a neutral attitude and 3 equals a positive attitude.

In Montenegro, all pupils indicated that they had a positive attitude to reading, as did almost all pupils in Romania. Attitudes to reading were almost identical across the two Romanian sites (landfill- and community-dwelling). In Slovakia, reported attitudes were markedly poorer, with 10 of 17 pupils reporting a neutral attitude to reading, four reporting a negative attitude and three a positive attitude.

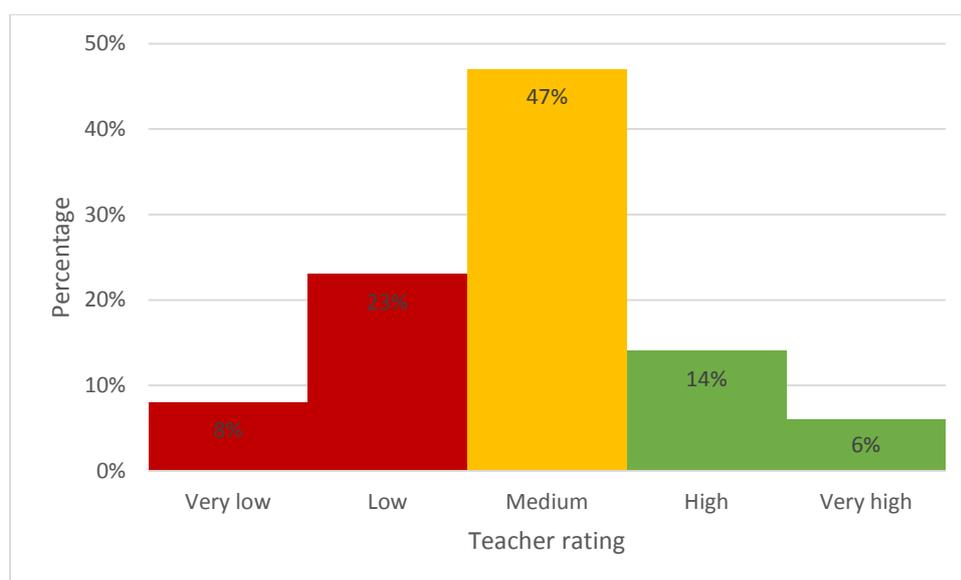
Table 3: Children's attitude to reading, start of programme

	Negative	Neutral	Positive	Total
Montenegro	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	20 (100%)	20
Romania	0 (0%)	7 (17%)	34 (83%)	41
Slovakia	4 (24%)	10 (59%)	3 (18%)	17
Total	4 (5%)	17 (22%)	57 (73%)	78

2.4 Children's motivation to learn

In addition to rating pupils' reading skills, classroom teachers were asked to rate their motivation to learn. Again, a five-point scale was used. Across the three countries as a whole, 22% of children were rated as highly or very highly motivated, 47% were considered by their teachers to have a medium level of motivation for learning, and the remaining 31% were considered to have low or very low motivation.

Figure 3: Child motivation to learn, as rated by classroom teachers



Ratings differed across countries. In Slovakia, 4 of 15 children (27%) were considered to have very low motivation. In Montenegro, 33% of pupils were considered to have high or very high motivation. In Romania, most children were rated as having medium or low motivation to learn.

2.5 Home Learning Environment (HLE)

While socio-economic and educational disadvantages are predictive of reduced parental involvement in and support of their child's education, this relationship is not determinative: disadvantaged parents can and frequently do provide excellent educational support to their children. As one major longitudinal study has concluded, the quality of a child's relationships and learning experiences in the family have more influence on future achievement than a range of other important factors, including socio-economics status (SES). "What parents do," the study concluded, "is more important than who parents are" (Sylva et al, 2004: 9).

Other research draws similar conclusions. Parenting practices and attitudes have a powerful influence on children's cognitive and non-cognitive development, and thus on their educational outcomes (Desforges and Abouchar, 2003; Melhuish, 2008, 2010). Stimulating activities and support can help children develop specific skills (e.g. with regard to literacy) but also – and perhaps more importantly – improve children's general learning abilities and motivations (Melhuish, 2010). While higher SES parents tend to employ more developmentally enhancing strategies, e.g. speaking to their children more often and using a broader and more positive range of words (Hart and Risley, 1995), and engaging in "concerted cultivation" of their child's abilities (Lareau, 1993), such strategies are not unique to socio-economically advantaged families. Even the most impoverished or otherwise disadvantaged families can and frequently do establish a positive Home Learning Environment (HLE). Longitudinal research in the UK has found that the HLE exerts an independent and indeed larger influence on educational attainment than parental education and socio-economics status (Melhuish, 2008).

The HLE can be considered to comprise of three primary components:

1. *Literacy resources in the home.* For example, the number of books in the home.
2. *Parental attitudes* to education in general and their child's education in particular.
3. *Parental actions and activities.* These may be specific to education, such as doing homework with one's child, or more general. Researchers have highlighted the importance of both avenues. For example, "good at-home parenting" refers to general parenting practices, with particular emphasis on providing children with emotional support and high aspirations (Desforges and Abouchar, 2003). These, in turn, are seen as helping children develop important psychological qualities such as high self-efficacy and a self-concept of themselves as a learner.

For the purposes of this evaluation, these components are operationalised as following:

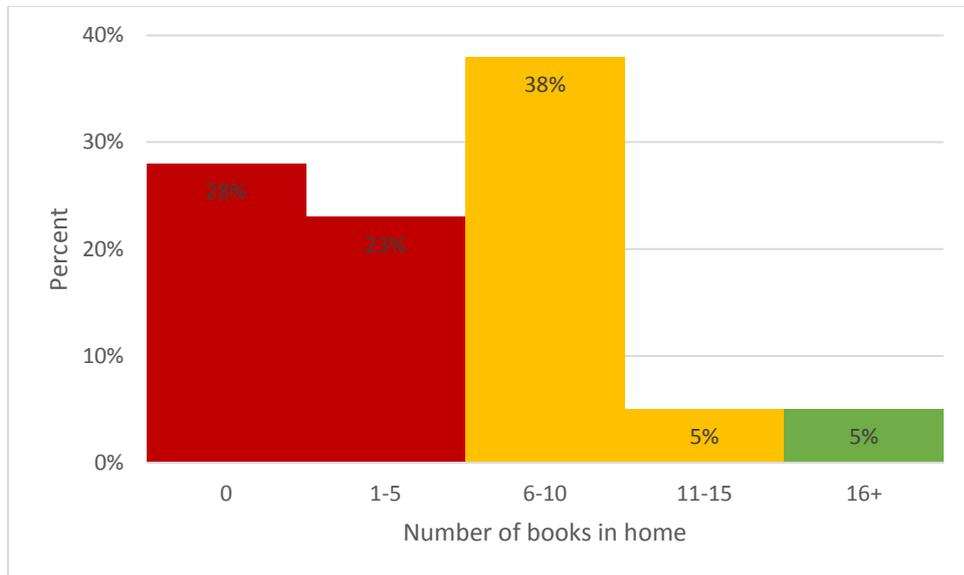
1. *Literacy resources in the home*: self-report measures of the number of children’s books in the home were collected from parents
2. *Parental attitudes* were assessed via two variables: how important the adult thought education is for the child’s future, and how confident the adult was about helping the child with learning
3. *Parental actions and activities* were measured through two avenues: adults were asked how often they helped their child with learning, and classroom teachers were asked to assess the adults’ level of involvement in their children’s education.

At the start of the programme, data were collected on all three of these components of the HLE. For components 2 and 3, follow-up data were collected at the end of the programme. This section focuses on data collected in Wave 1 (the start of the programme).

Literacy resources: number of books in the home

At the start of the programme, parents were asked how many books (including but not limited to children’s books) they had in their home. Taking all three countries as a whole, 90% of households had fewer than 10 books.

Figure 4: Number of books in the home, start of LIT3



In Montenegro, no adults reported having more than 10 books in the home. As Montenegrin programme staff noted, all of the families participating in Literacy Cubed had at least two children in primary school. Even if these families possessed no books other than their children’s required school textbooks, they should have more than 10 books. However, school textbooks in Montenegro are not free, and most children in the refugee camp own only a fraction of the textbooks they should.

Table 4: Number of books in the home, by country

	No books in home	1-5 books	6-10 books	11-15 books	16+ books	Total
MON	4 (21%)	5 (26%)	10 (53%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	19
ROM	5 (39%)	2 (15%)	3 (23%)	1 (8%)	2 (15%)	13
SLO	2 (29%)	2 (29%)	2 (29%)	1 (14%)	0 (0%)	7
Total	11 (28%)	9 (23%)	15 (39%)	2 (5%)	2 (5%)	39

Perhaps surprisingly, landfill-dwelling Romanians reported having more books in the home than did community dwelling Romanians. Of the six community dwelling Romanians for whom we have data on this question, four reported having no books in the home, and none reported having more than 10. Of the seven landfill-dwelling Romanians who answered this question, only one reported having no books in the home, and two reported having more than 16.

Where these books are kept

According to programme staff, most Roma families live in cramped, crowded conditions, and face major challenges in terms of finding space for books, or making space for children to do homework. Course participants reported a wide range of places where books were kept. However, only six reported keeping the books on a shelf, and most reported having minimal space to store books. In many cases, books were kept on the floor, or under a bed. Qualitative interviews highlighted the problems Roma families faced in this regard. For example, in Montenegro, the local Roma population resides in extremely cramped refugee camp dwellings. For religious reasons, the Roma population in this camp does not use tables; therefore, what few books they have must be kept on the floor. This is also a problem with regard to finding space for homework or reading for pleasure. In the absence of tables, children struggle to find space for learning.

Parental attitudes

How important the adult thinks education is for the child's future

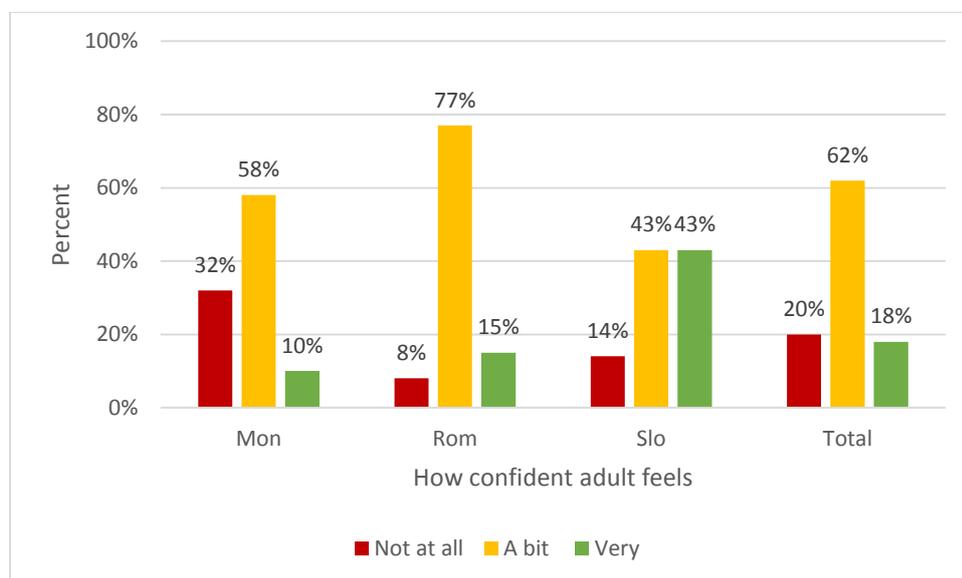
Parental attitudes to education play an important role in determining the quality of the Home Learning Environment. Parental attitudes can be influenced by individual and family factors, but are also influenced by a range of broader factors, including cultural norms and poverty. Adults participating in Literacy Cubed were asked how important they feel education is for their child's future: not at all, a bit, or very important. Every adult who answered this question said that education is very important for their child's future. These extremely positive views of education and its

potential impact on life outcomes fits well with evidence from the research literature, which indicates that almost all parents express positive attitudes regarding the importance of their child’s education (Carpentieri et al, 2011).

Parental confidence

Parental involvement in children’s education is influenced by confidence: parents who feel more capable of helping their child’s education are more likely to be regularly involved in their child’s learning (EU-HLG, 2012). To assess parental confidence, we asked parents how confident they felt about helping their child with learning: not at all confident, a bit confident or very confident. Data were collected from 39 parents: 19 in Montenegro, 13 in Romania, and 7 in Slovakia. Figure 5 illustrates responses to this question at the start of the programme.

Figure 5: Adult confidence re helping child with learning, start of programme



Parental actions and activities

Almost all parents view education as a key to success in life, and hope that their children will do well academically. However, parents with fewer cultural, social and economic resources are less likely to act successfully on these positive attitudes (Carpentieri et al, 2011; Lareau, 2003; Reay, 1998). The importance of education could therefore be seen as a learned belief, but not yet a cultural practice or reality. That is, adults can believe in a concept, without that concept playing a central role in shaping daily actions and activities.

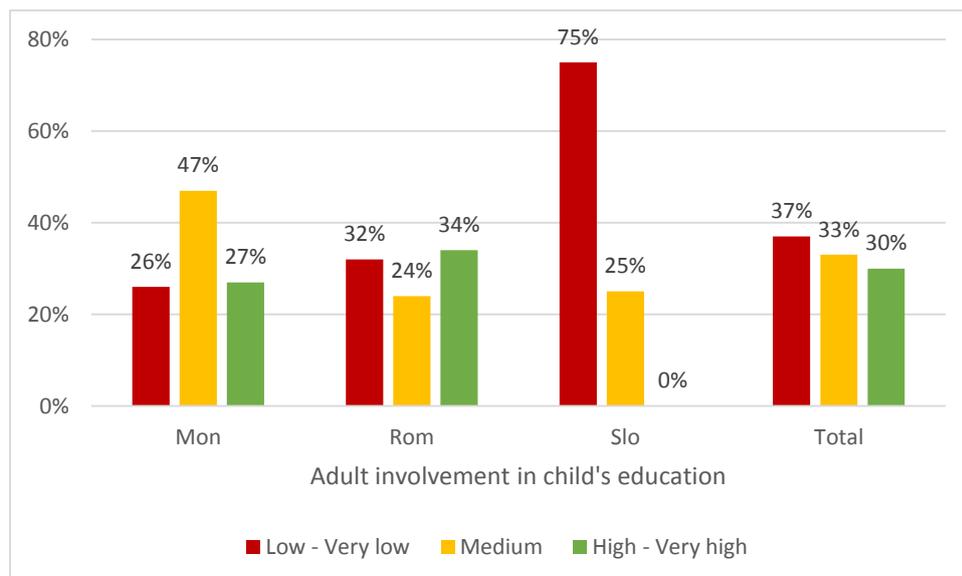
Parental involvement in education

The research literature indicates that while disadvantaged parents place a high value on education and have high hopes for their children, they tend to be less likely than other parents to be actively involved in their child’s education (Lareau, 2003; Reay, 1998). A number of factors have been shown to influence this lower level of

involvement. Well-educated parents tend to be very aware of the importance of active involvement in their child’s educational development, and typically engage in a wide range of behaviours designed to cultivate (Lareau, 2003) that development. While disadvantaged parents are often encouraged to be more engaged with their child’s education, they often lack the confidence and/or skills to act on these messages. Some parents believe that parents and schools have separate responsibilities, with the former responsible for the moral and physical well-being of their children, with schools being responsible for academic development. Many disadvantaged parents believe that they not only cannot but should not seek to play a central role in literacy development, which is seen as part of the school’s domain. Some of the key determinants of parental involvement are: family social class; maternal level of education; poverty; maternal mental health; number of parents in the home; and, to a lesser degree, ethnicity (Carpentieri et al, 2011). Determinants of parental involvement are not uni-directional, however; parental involvement is strongly influenced by a child’s level of attainment. The higher that level, the more involved parents become (Desforges and Abouchaar, 2003).

At the start of Literacy Cubed, individuals with knowledge of the families (classroom teachers or Roma mediators) were asked to rate the adults’ level of involvement in their children’s education. Ratings were collected for a total of 52 adults (19 in Montenegro, 25 in Romania and 8 in Slovakia.) These ratings differed markedly across the three countries. For example, 36% of Romanian adults were seen as having a very high level of involvement in their child’s education; this includes seven of 11 landfill-dwelling adults (64%). In contrast, no Slovakian adult was seen as having more than a medium level of involvement.

Figure 6: Adults’ level of involvement in their children's education



How often adult helps child with learning

In addition to asking classroom teachers and Roma mediators about parental involvement, we asked adults themselves. In particular, adults were asked how often they helped their child with learning. Overall, 36% of parents said they helped their children with their learning at least a few times a week, and another 31% said they did so about once a week. Combining these two categories, this means that 67% of adults reported helping their child with learning at least once a week, with well over 80% of Romanian and Slovakian parents reporting doing so. (Romanian parents' responses were similar across the two different sites in that country.) Only 47% of Montenegrin parents reported helping their child at least once a week. Another 21% said they help their children at least once a month, and 13% said they helped their children less often.

Table 5: How often adult helps child with learning

	Never	A few times a year	Once a week to once a month	About once a week	A few times a week or more	Total
MON	1 (5%)	3 (16%)	6 (32%)	5 (26%)	4 (21%)	19 (100%)
ROM	0 (0%)	1 (8%)	1 (8%)	5 (39%)	6 (46%)	13 (100%)
SLO	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (14%)	2 (29%)	4 (57%)	7 (100%)
TOTAL	1 (3%)	4 (10%)	8 (21%)	12 (31%)	14 (36%)	39 (100%)

The responses to this question suggest important cultural differences across the three contexts. In particular, Slovakian parents' involvement in their child's education was rated relatively low by classroom teachers and Roma mediators in that country, despite the fact that Slovakian parents themselves reported more frequent involvement in their child's learning than did parents in Montenegro and Romania. It is possible that Slovakian parents have exaggerated their level of involvement. However, the contrast between these two findings may highlight both the normative nature of the teacher/mediator assessment, and the heterogeneity of the cultural contexts in which European Roma families reside. The Slovakian Roma participating in Literacy Cubed were comparatively well off compared to their counterparts in Montenegro and Romania. It may be that while the Slovakian parents were relatively well involved in their children's education as compared to Romanian and (especially) Montenegrin parents, the Slovakian Roma parents were being compared (by teachers and mediators) to a higher cultural standard. A similar dynamic may have existed in Romania. Despite both sets of Romanian parents (community-dwelling and landfill-dwelling) reporting similar levels of involvement in their child's learning, teachers and mediators assessed the landfill-dwelling Romanians adults as more involved in their child's learning.

2.6 Discussion

Before the programme commenced, data were collected which gave insights into the Home Learning Environment (HLE) of the families taking part in the Literacy Cubed programme. Nine in ten families reported that there were fewer than 10 books in their home. The low number of books in these families' homes stands in sharp contrast to children's self-reported positive attitudes to reading. In Montenegro, no families had more than 10 books. As these families would be expected to have at least 10 books in the form of required school text books, these results indicate that the cost of these books may prevent families from acquiring them.

Moreover, due to cramped housing conditions, many of the families in this programme struggled to find space for books, or space in which their children could complete their homework or read for pleasure.

However, these limitations were not accompanied by negative views of education and its importance; the parents taking part in the Literacy Cubed programme were all extremely positive about the importance of education for their child's future. Parents were not always confident in their own abilities to help their children with their education: in Montenegro, for example, only one in ten parents reported that they were very confident about helping their child with their learning. The majority (60%) of parents across the three countries said that they were "a bit" confident.

Nevertheless two-thirds of parents in the programme helped their child with their learning at least once a week, although rates were markedly lower in Montenegro, where slightly under half of parents helped at least once a week. Data gathered from classroom teachers or Roma mediators, rating the adults' level of involvement in their children's education, varied markedly across the three countries. For example, 36% of Romanian adults were seen as having a very high level of involvement in their child's education; in contrast, no Slovakian adult was seen as having more than a medium level of involvement.

3. Programme inputs and processes

While the primary focus of this evaluation was on programme outcomes, we were also interested in the factors influencing those outcomes. This section looks at programme inputs and processes – in particular, the:

- Literacy Cubed curriculum and learning materials.
- The “Wordbank” aspect of the programme.
- The children’s books given to families at the end of the programme.
- Programme staff.
- The volunteers and reading buddies who supported programme implementation.

3.1 Curriculum and materials

The main principles around which the Literacy Cubed curriculum was built were as follows:

- To involve three generations of the family (primary school children and their parents/carers and grandparents).
- To use age-oriented approaches for each group (reception year/1st grade and children in grade 2 to 4).
- To give adults the opportunity to develop both their literacy skills and their parental support for the development of their children literacy skills.
- To include the necessary basic skills to enable at-risk Roma children to stay in school and have academic success.
- To infuse health literacy into the curriculum as a tool to improve the living and learning conditions of the Roma primary school children.
- To build motivation by using a role-model approach – secondary school Roma children who had achieved a certain level of academic success would become reading buddies for the primary school Roma children.
- To promote family literacy (reading and health literacy) in Roma communities as a tool for raising the attainment level of Roma children in general education.

The aims of the curriculum were:

- To equip parents with the skills and practices to support the development of child literacy;
- To support parents to be the first teacher of children and partners in their children’s education (parenting and learning support);
- To provide opportunities for interactive literacy activities between children and parents.

The curriculum was designed so that at the end of the 16 workshops, adult participants would be able to:

- Explain at least 12 out of the 16 key concepts in reading and health;
- Independently use more words than at the beginning of the programme (measured by counting the number of words in their Wordbanks);
- Demonstrate a positive change in their attitudes toward learning and education, including their perception of themselves as their child’s “first teacher”.

By the end of the 16 workshops children participants would be able to:

- Explain at least 12 out of the 16 key concepts in reading and health;
- Independently use more words than at the beginning of the programme, (measured by counting the number of words in the word banks);
- Demonstrate a gain in confidence as a reader and motivation to read and learn.

Appendix 2 provides further details on the themes of the 16 workshops, the topics covered and the types of learning strategies used in the FL programme.

Because of the limited and often discouraging prior educational experiences of many programme participants, the curriculum emphasised competencies such as learning-to-learn and non-cognitive skills or traits such as patience, good behaviour and persistence.

Following the pilot, programme staff were interviewed in order to collect their perspectives on the strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum and programme materials. Trainers pointed to a number of positives of the curriculum. These included the topics, which were deemed to flow well from one to another, but were also used flexibly when trainers wanted to adjust the order of the sessions. The following sections of this chapter summarise key points from the staff interviews. These points covered a range of areas:

- The intergenerational nature of the curriculum

- Differentiation of teaching within the curriculum
- The health literacy aspect of the curriculum
- Adaptations that were made to the curriculum
- Development and procurement of teaching materials.

Intergenerational curriculum

When developing the curriculum, it was important to keep the needs of all participating family members in mind. With the Roma families, this included consideration of the fact that many children in the programme read better than their parents – in some cases, much better. This has implications for materials and for the nature of family activities.

When queried about the suitability of the curriculum for participants, trainers in Montenegro were very positive, indicating that the curriculum met the needs of parents and children alike.

The adults struggled with some joint work, because they lacked confidence with regard to education. According to programme staff, most local Roma mothers have only modest literacy skills at best, and do not see themselves as able to help their children with their education. They have few opportunities to develop these aptitudes or practices in their daily lives, which centre on housework and the physical care of their children. Family commitments mean that women in the Montenegro refugee camp rarely engage in shared activities

Montenegrin adults reportedly enjoyed the many informal discussions built into lessons, and appreciated being asked to share their opinions with the trainers and other parents. They also enjoyed the social aspect of the programme and would often stay after the workshop for additional discussions with programme staff, on a range of topics. Such informal learning opportunities should be encouraged in order to further engage adults and ensure that the learning gained in the family literacy class has a long term impact on the development of the family's literacy practices.

To some degree, the programme may have contributed to improved self-confidence, self-concept and empowerment. This maternal empowerment would be concordant with the impacts of family literacy programmes targeted at disadvantaged mothers in other countries, e.g. Malta (Spiteri and Camilleri, 2003) and Turkey (Bekman and Koçak, 2010).

One intergenerational aspect of the curriculum that came in for some criticism was the lack of sufficient focus on activities and lessons aimed at engendering or facilitating parent-child bonding. Parent-child bonding is at the centre of a number of family literacy initiatives, e.g. the numerous Booktrust-inspired book gifting programmes throughout Europe. This bonding has been shown in several studies

(e.g. Kağıtçıbaşı et al 2005) to be an important outcome of family literacy programmes, and an important mechanism in influencing future child educational outcomes.

Differentiation

Some programme staff suggested that a more differentiated curriculum would be an improvement, as this would allow trainers to work more effectively with children and parents with a broad range of ability levels. For example, some reading materials and assignments could be used or designed to cover the same concepts, but pitched at different ability levels. Other trainers indicated that their most effective workshops were those in which they made special efforts at differentiation.

Health literacy

Health literacy was a key component of the curriculum. According to the programme developers, in poor Roma communities, low education attainment levels are coupled with poor hygiene and poor health in general. In some Roma communities hygiene – both personal and with regard to the household – can be poor. This is the situation in the Montenegro refugee camp. However, the Roma populations in Literacy Cubed were heterogeneous, and some of the health-related materials and discussions were seen as potentially offensive by some participants. Many Roma are unfairly stereotyped as unhygienic, and could thus see hygiene-related lessons as playing into such stereotypes. For example, some participants questioned the rationale for discussions about washing fruits and vegetables and hands before eating, as they already did this as a matter of course. However, discussions of healthy eating were better received.

From the perspective of the evaluation team, the health literacy aspects of Literacy Cubed were overly didactic, and did not take sufficient account of the broader structural factors influencing Roma health. In contrast to the reading literacy activities, which were participatory and aimed at cultivating positive literacy behaviours through engagement in literacy practices, the health literacy elements of the programme at times appeared to be based on the notion that poor health practices were primarily a product of lack of information, rather than difficult living conditions, e.g. poor housing and limited access to healthcare. Future versions of the programme should consider a different approach to this complex issue.

Adaptations to the curriculum

Programme staff sometimes changed the order of the lessons; the curriculum was praised for the in-built flexibility that allowed trainers to make these changes as they saw fit. Programme staff also reported reducing the amount of time devoted to some activities and increasing the time devoted to others, to better meet the needs and interests of participants.

Teaching materials

Programme staff at each site developed and/or procured their own teaching materials. These materials could not be developed centrally and shared across the three sites. Language issues could have been overcome with translation, but programme staff felt that centrally developed materials would not be appropriate to the three different programme contexts.

When asked about the process of developing and/or procuring these materials, and the time and budgetary resources required to do so, programme staff indicated that this aspect of Literacy Cubed was not particularly expensive, but was resource intensive with regard to staff time. Staff devoted extensive efforts to finding and/or producing texts that were appropriate for the curriculum topics. It was noted that developing appropriate ways to introduce these text to three different generations was not always without challenges. However, as programme staff in Slovakia argued, “The enjoyment when it turned out great [made it] worth doing”.

Programme intensity and duration

Literacy Cubed was an intensive programme: two sessions per week, each lasting three hours. In all three countries, there were suggestions that future programmes should be less intensive; however, suggestions for how to achieve that differed.

In Montenegro, programme staff suggested that the overall total of 48 programme hours worked well, but that the division of this into two three-hour sessions per week sometimes meant that children and parents began to flag towards the end of many sessions. It was also noted that while children typically have a great deal of free time during the summer, parents generally have routines. This is true even for the unemployed parents of the refugee camp. Three-hour sessions can cause significant disruption to a mother’s routine – for example, making it very difficult to complete the housework. Attendance in Montenegro remained high, but programme staff suggested that future iterations of the programme might benefit from workshops that were 1.5-2 hours long, and which thus fit better into parents’ routines. One suggestion from Montenegro was three workshops a week, no greater than 1.5 hours per session. However, Slovakia programme staff said that even two workshops a week was too much for their target group. These trainers suggested a less intensive programme. In Romania, the consensus was that a three hour session was fine for children on summer break, but was too long for most parents.

However, programme stakeholders also highlighted potential drawbacks of shorter sessions. These could include a negative impact on the social aspects of the programme, and informal learning opportunities associated with such aspects, e.g. while having lunch together.

Future versions of the programme should be encouraged to experiment with differing levels of intensity in order to address these questions.

3.2 Wordbank

The Wordbank is a learning tool described by Donald Bear and colleagues (2008). A Wordbank is a collection of words chosen by children, who must remember them well enough to be able to recognise them in isolation. Perceived benefits of the Wordbank approach include learning new words, learning to value those words, and improving one's capacity for self-assessment regarding word knowledge. The approach requires minimal resources – primarily cards on which words are written, containers in which to store the cards, and space for the containers.

During the first Literacy Cubed workshop, the Wordbank was introduced to programme participants. Trainers presented words chosen from a text read in that workshop – participants could then choose the words they had learned during the session. Children were encouraged to write the words on blank cards, or could seek help from programme staff if necessary. Beginning with the second workshop, words were checked. Participants read their cards to see if they still remembered all the words, and were asked questions about them – e.g. “Could you read me that word?”, “Can you use it in a phrase?” If some words had been forgotten, they could be withdrawn from the Wordbank, relearned and added back later.

Programme staff were very enthusiastic about the Wordbank, which adults and children alike reportedly found engaging and motivating. Participants enjoyed learning new words and seeing tangible evidence of their growing vocabularies. Being able to recognise their progressive development was highly motivating. Participants also enjoyed creating boxes for their words. In Slovakia, words from the Wordbank were used at the end of the programme to help each family create a “family story”; this was seen as highly enjoyable. Overall, the Wordbank was viewed by programme staff in all three countries as very effective.

3.3 Book gifting

Central to the programme was a love of books. Each family taking part in the family literacy programme received five books as gifts as well as copies of the reading materials used in workshops, with the aim of creating a mini-library at home. At the end of the programme, child participants received at least two children's books. In retrospect, programme staff felt that there would have been advantages to allowing children to take the books home earlier in the programme – for example, this could have stimulated at-home reading and facilitated classroom discussions.

In Slovakia, programme staff created an informal classroom library, with a large number of colourful children's books. Programme staff in each country were free to develop their own bookgifting strategies, including which books to give away and how to acquire those books.

Acquisition of books

In Montenegro, Literacy Cubed staff consulted with programme participants before acquiring books. Children and adults alike typically wanted books that would be repeatedly useful. All of the mothers who were consulted said that they would like to have practical, well-illustrated cookbooks; some mothers also expressed a wish for books about improving relationships, including better parenting practices. For the children, a primary consideration was the fact that schoolbooks are not free in Montenegro, and many Roma children therefore lack the full complement of textbooks and other school reading material. Given this, Literacy Cubed staff chose to give children copies of some of the books they would be expected to read in the upcoming school years. These were supplemented by a “popular linguistics” book, to help children and parents improve their Montenegrin.

In terms of acquiring the books, the Pedagogical Center of Montenegro (PCMNE) donated approximately 80 copies, and a similar number were purchased. According to programme staff, participants were very happy to receive these books.

In Romania, books were acquired via two sources: 1) a book collection, and 2) the purchase of discounted books using project funding. The book collection was organised with the help of the County Library, which was a member of the Stakeholder Working Group. The book collection was also publicised on the Learn & Vision Association Facebook page. Staff in Romania pointed to a number of minor challenges regarding the acquisition of books, including:

- A limited supply of some titles in local bookstores.
- Difficulties finding books that included health literacy information (these had to be ordered from other cities).
- Choosing books that satisfied the needs and interests of different age and gender groups, while also having at least some educational value.
- The receipt via the book collection of a number of age-inappropriate books, e.g. secondary school mathematics textbooks.

In contrast to Montenegro, staff in Romania chose not to consult in advance with participants regarding which books to acquire. As the Romanian Roma were a more heterogeneous group, it was felt that it would be too challenging to meet everyone’s desires.

Children were especially happy to receive their books – for example, programme staff reported that one small boy hugged his to his chest. One challenge was that children who came only to one or two workshops were still keen to be given books – a request to which programme staff agreed.

In Slovakia, programme staff sourced books via a number of routes including bookstore sales. When choosing books, they sought to provide those that programme participants wanted to read. Information about reading wishes was gathered through conversations with and observations of parents and children. Staff suggested that in future iterations of the programme, they might want to briefly interview participants to get more information on desired books.

3.4 Volunteers and reading buddies

The Literacy Cubed programme objectives stressed the importance of engaging volunteers. This engagement was seen as benefiting programme participants and staff, but also as a benefit for the volunteers themselves, who could gain interesting and valuable experience via their involvement. Two different groups were recruited: 1) Volunteers, who were adult university students, or students in the final years of secondary school; 2) Reading Buddies, who were typically Roma pupils in lower secondary school (that is, aged 11-15). The aim was to recruit a total of 36 volunteers and 48 reading buddies across the three participating countries.

Volunteers were identified through the universities and local NGOs. In exchange for their work on the project, it was hoped that they would learn through direct involvement about the family literacy programme and its implementation.

Volunteers had a number of roles:

- To assist teachers during workshops,
- To facilitate literacy games for children,
- To help with catering and food,
- To help with evaluation data collection.

Volunteers

Volunteers helped to support a broad range of teaching and learning activities; they also helped with practical tasks such as serving lunches and providing childcare. In Romania, some volunteers also helped with recruitment. A key role for volunteers was Wordbank support. In Montenegro, for example, programme staff felt that the Wordbank activities worked especially well if one volunteer (or reading buddy) worked with each family. In all three countries, volunteers were charged with recording Wordbank words each session. This one-to-one attention was also useful during other activities.

The central role of volunteers in Literacy Cubed is evident in the number of hours they contributed to the programme. Table 6 shows the number of volunteers in each country, and the total number of volunteer hours. Over the three countries, a total of 29 volunteers contributed to Literacy Cubed: 13 in Montenegro, 10 in Romania and

eight in Slovakia. These volunteers contributed a total of 1550 hours to the programme.

Table 6: Number of volunteers and hours worked

	Number	Total Hours	Avg hours (programme)	Avg hours (per week)
MON	13	864	66	3.3
ROM	10	264	26	8.3
SLO	8	422	53	6.6
TOTAL	29	1550	53	6.7

(NB: All figures are rounded to the nearest whole number.)

The intensity of volunteers' involvement differed across countries. In Romania, volunteers' contributions averaged 26.35 hours over the eight-week duration of the programme, for an average of 3.3 hours per volunteer per week. This was to support six hours of programme lessons per week. In Montenegro and Slovakia, volunteers devoted more time to the programme than participants did. In Montenegro, the 13 volunteers averaged 66.46 hours of commitment, or 8.3 hours per week each. In Slovakia, eight volunteers combined for a total average of 52.75 hours each. This was just under the average for all three countries combined, which was 53.4 hours.

Volunteer recruitment

In Montenegro, the volunteers were university students from various teacher education and humanities departments in the local university's Faculty of Philosophy. The Pedagogical Centre of Montenegro has long-standing experience coordinating a volunteer club for this Faculty, meaning that the volunteers who were recruited to the programme already had experience of working with the local Roma families.

In Romania, volunteers were recruited with help of a local NGO (ProVobis) that has experience of recruiting and managing volunteers. Programme staff also used Facebook to publicise the need for volunteers. However, they emphasised the importance of identifying trustworthy volunteers, and ensuring child and family protection. Volunteers were typically university students studying topics such as social work and psychology. There were also some post-university volunteers, including a school counsellor and a support teacher.

Some Slovakian volunteers were in the final years of secondary school; others were university students. In Slovakia, volunteers were recruited through the local authority. Programme staff noted that summer was a good time to recruit students; it might be more difficult to do so during the academic year.

Volunteer roles and responsibilities

Volunteers helped trainers with a variety of classroom tasks: distributing the materials used in the workshop; helping to coordinate activities; helping with

classroom management. In many instances, they also participated in workshop activities, serving as models for participants. They also helped with childcare. Volunteers were seen as adding to the informal, fun character of the programme. As one trainer observed, “They helped a lot in creating a warmer, easier, and more entertaining atmosphere. It was a great idea to have them in the programme.” Another trainer said that the volunteers had gone “above and beyond expectations”.

Reading buddies

A total of 23 reading buddies contributed to Literacy Cubed: 4 in Montenegro, 12 in Romania and 7 in Slovakia. These reading buddies contributed a total of 1069 hours to the programme. This total was relatively evenly distributed across the three countries, with 384 total hours in Montenegro, 249 in Romania and 268 in Slovakia.

However, the intensity of reading buddies’ involvement differed greatly across the three countries. Though Montenegro had the smallest number of reading buddies (4), they accumulated the greatest number of hours of any country. They achieved this by averaging 96 hours per buddy over the eight weeks of the programme, or 12 hours per person per week. In Romania and Slovakia, reading buddies were more numerous, but their involvement was less intensive. In Romania, 12 reading buddies averaged 20.75 hours each over the programme’s eight weeks, for a weekly average of 2.6 hours per person. In Slovakia, reading buddies were less numerous (7), but they contributed a greater number of hours. Slovakian reading buddies averaged 38.2 hours each over the duration of the programme, or 4.8 hours per person per week.

Table 7: Number of volunteers and hours worked

	Number	Total Hours	Avg hours (programme)	Avg hours (per week)
MON	4	384	96	12
ROM	12	249	21	3
SLO	7	268	38	5
TOTAL	23	901	39	5

(NB: All figures are rounded to the nearest whole number.)

Reading buddy recruitment

Reading buddies were typically selected with the help of schools. They were generally in middle school years, i.e. 11-15 years.

Roles and responsibilities

In the workshops, reading buddies served as role models or “older friends” who took part in activities along with families, for example, by helping younger children with their reading and writing.

Perhaps because of their younger age, reading buddies were not always as reliable and helpful as volunteers. For example, many reading buddies had poor attendance. Others struggled to be patient with younger children.

3.5 Discussion

Trainers identified a number of programme strengths. In particular, the pedagogy and curriculum appeared to be highly engaging for children. However, there was evidence that future Family Literacy programmes with Roma will need to place greater emphasis on the intergenerational aspects of the curriculum and on activities that facilitate parent-child bonding, especially with groups where parents lack confidence in their ability to support their children's learning.

Another strength of the curriculum was its flexibility; the lesson order could be changed and activities shaped to meet the needs of participants. Appropriate teaching materials were developed separately by the three country teams – although this task was labour intensive, this work was both challenging and rewarding for the developers and carried few budgetary implications.

Features of the curriculum and its delivery that engaged children included:

- high levels of communication between trainers and children, including a great deal of constructive feedback from trainers to children;
- high levels of communication and active engagement with their peers – for example, through large amounts of group work;
- the high amount of positive reinforcement built into the programme model. This included displays of child and family work, and large amounts of praise;
- a curriculum designed to encourage enjoyable learning and learning through play;
- the high level of scaffolding⁷ built into the programme. Children were able to repeatedly experience and build on successes.

The least successful aspect of the curriculum was the content on health literacy. Some parents found basic health literacy information to be patronising, as it suggested that they did not already engage in these practices. Some trainers indicated that it was sometimes difficult to integrate health literacy messages into broader workshop themes.

⁷ Scaffolding: A learning process in which support – in the form of resources, tasks, guidance and so on – tailored to the needs of the student is given with the intention of helping the student achieve his/her learning goals. These supports are gradually removed as students learn to learn and become autonomous learners.

A particularly successful aspect of the programme in all three countries was the Wordbank. Participants enjoyed learning new words and seeing tangible evidence of their growing vocabularies.

Literacy Cubed volunteers supported a range of teaching and learning activities (especially with Wordbank) and provided help on practical tasks such as serving lunches and childcare. Volunteers contributed a total of 1550 hours to the programme, and were rated very highly by programme staff.

Challenges associated with reading buddies, such as poor attendance and unreliability, suggest that future iterations of the programme may benefit from older reading buddies, e.g. senior high school age.

4. Recruitment, attendance, completion and engagement

This section summarises findings about Roma families' involvement with the Literacy Cubed programme. First, we look at recruitment onto the programme. Were the targeted Roma families eager to participate in the programme, or reluctant? For adults and children who joined the programme, we look at three output measures: attendance, learning hours and course completion. Finally, this section presents data regarding participants' level of engagement with Literacy Cubed – that is, the degree to which they were seen to be active, involved participants in the programme.

4.1 Recruitment

Across the three countries as a whole, Literacy Cubed sought to recruit 48 children and 72 adults. As shown by Table 8, the targets for children were greatly exceeded in all countries, but in two countries – Romania and Slovakia – the adult targets were missed. The reason for exceeding the child targets was the need to recruit additional families in order to increase adult participation.

Table 8: Recruitment targets and achievements

COUNTRY	CHILDREN		ADULTS	
	<i>Target</i>	<i>Achieved</i>	<i>Target</i>	<i>Achieved</i>
MON	12	21	18	19
ROM	24	50	36	25
SLO	12	18	18	10
TOTAL	48	89	72	54
DIFFERENCE		+41		-18

In Montenegro, recruitment of children, parents, grandparents and other adults presented few problems. However, in Romania and Slovakia recruitment of children was often challenging – and recruitment of adults proved even more difficult still. This section first discusses the challenges faced by programme staff in Romania and Slovakia, and how those challenges were addressed, before moving on to the Montenegrin experience.

In Romania, the anticipated amount of effort required for recruitment proved far greater than expected. Recruitment efforts were more resource intensive than anticipated. While these efforts did lead to good levels of child attendance and completion, they did not produce the desired outcomes with regard to attendance and completion by adults. (These outcomes are discussed more fully in Chapter 5.)

In Romania, the programme team worked with teachers and Roma mediators to recruit families, and took these groups' advice on who to invite to the programme. These efforts built on previous family literacy-related working efforts with local schools and school mediators. However, many of the families who had been recommended never showed up. The reasons why are unclear. This setback prompted a revision of the recruitment strategy. Programme staff visited the local landfill in order to consult with Roma community leaders. These leaders showed a strong focus on opportunity costs, arguing that programme participation was not feasible, as it meant that the time available for working on the landfill would be reduced. This argument applied to children as well as adults. After lengthy discussions, these Roma community leaders agreed to give their approval for children to attend the programme. However, even this attendance proved to be contingent upon various labour opportunities, such as seasonal fruit picking. Eventually, 50 Romanian children enrolled on the programme, as did 25 parents. (Note that the programme originally sought an adult to child ratio of 1.5:1.) As later sections of this report illustrate, even amongst the parents who did enrol, attendance tended to be low.

In Slovakia, recruitment was also difficult. To facilitate recruitment, programme staff sought cooperation from local community outreach workers. However, this cooperation proved difficult to attain, leading to recruitment challenges. An alternative recruitment strategy was thus developed. This strategy centred on personal meetings with parents, explaining the aims and methods of the programme. The revised recruitment strategy also included measures such as printing leaflets that were distributed in Roma communities by the town workers, written invitations brought home by Roma children, personal meetings, and an offer to provide transport for families from more distant areas.

In Montenegro, recruitment proved to be much more straightforward. Programme staff reported no difficulties in recruiting participants, whether children or adults. This was attributed to staff members' many years of experience working with the local Roma community.

Grandparents

Literacy Cubed sought to be a three-generation programme: children, parents and grandparents, thus the "Cubed" of the programme title. Amongst the adults recruited to the programme, six (11%) were grandmothers. Four of these were in Montenegro, with one in Romania and one in Slovakia. Montenegrin programme staff attributed the strong three-generation recruitment to their long experience of working with the local Roma community. This experience meant that programme staff knew which parents and grandparents would be most likely to be interested in the programme and sufficiently motivated to attend. With regard to grandmothers, programme staff also knew which ones were influential in their families and would thus facilitate the involvement of parents and children as well.

In Montenegro, grandmothers were seen as playing an important role in the programme – in some cases, using the respect afforded to them to help facilitate attention and motivation during workshops.

In Slovakia, the one grandparent who enrolled had several grandchildren in the programme. Like many parents, a number of grandparents were employed and thus were unable to attend Literacy Cubed.

In Romania, only one grandmother enrolled and she dropped out. Programme staff observed that the role of grandmothers in the local Roma communities was mostly centred on supporting family members in the home; such support did not typically extend to educational issues.

Men

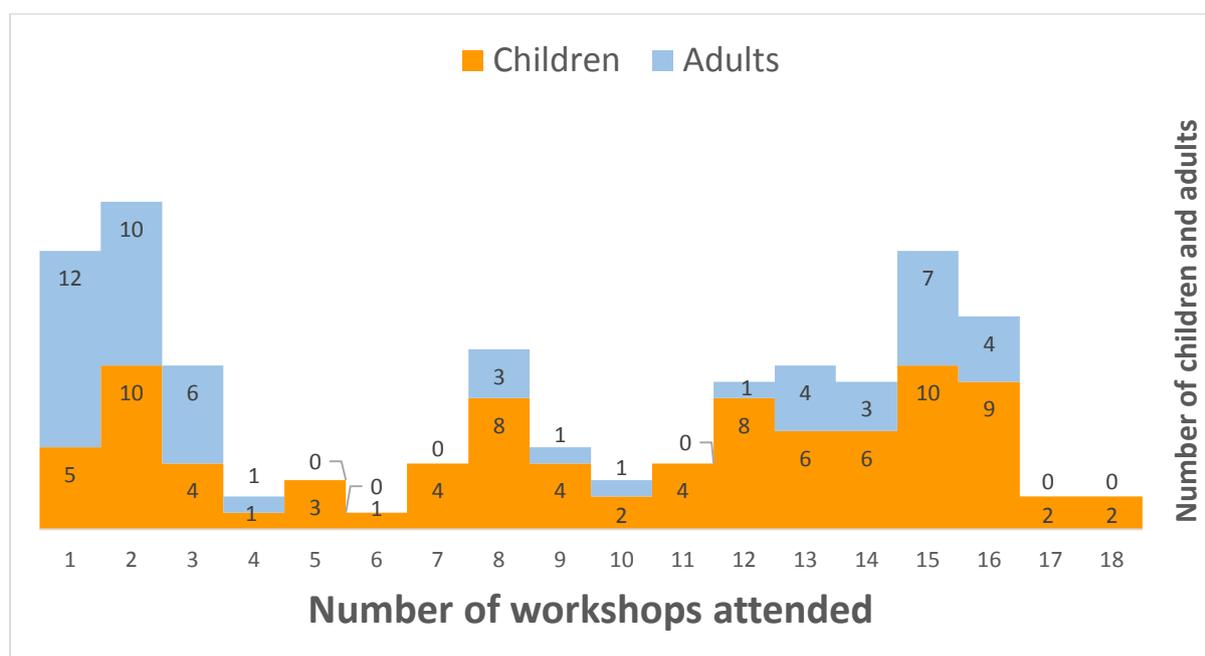
Literacy Cubed staff encouraged fathers and grandfathers to attend, but did not make special, male-centred efforts to recruit them. This lack of male-focused recruitment was based on knowledge of the local Roma communities and the strongly gendered roles within them. In all three countries, programme staff felt that efforts to recruit adult males were very unlikely to prove fruitful and would carry an opportunity cost, reducing the time and resources available to recruit mothers and grandmothers. In Romania, one male did enrol; however, he attended only one session.

More generally, programme staff pointed to males as a barrier to female attendance. Permission for mothers' attendance had to be sought from their husbands, and from other key males in the community. Such permission was not always forthcoming.

4.2 Attendance

The programme lasted for eight weeks, and consisted of two workshops per week, for a total of 16 workshops. Each workshop was three hours long. Figure 7 shows attendance figures for children (orange) and adults (blue).

Figure 7: Number of workshops attended



Attendance figures differed significantly across countries. Table 9 shows the number of workshops attended by children and adults in each country. Attendance at 1-7 workshops is highlighted in red, 8-12 in amber, and 13 or more in green.

Table 9: Number of workshops attended by children and adults, country

Number of workshops attended	MON		ROM		SLO	
	Children	Adults	Children	Adults	Children	Adults
1	1	1	3	11	1	-
2	1	1	7	5	2	4
3	-	-	4	6	-	-
4	-	-	-	1	1	-
5	-	-	3	-	-	-
6	-	-	1	-	-	-
7	-	-	4	-	-	-
8	-	-	2	-	6	3
9	-	-	2	-	2	1
10	-	-	1	-	1	1
11	-	-	4	-	-	-
12	-	-	6	-	2	1
13	4	4	1	-	1	-
14	3	3	2	-	1	-
15	8	7	1	-	1	-
16	4	3	5	1	-	-
17+	-	-	2	1	-	-
Total	21	19	50	25	18	10

Children

There was a very wide range in the number of workshops attended by pupils. 15 children attended only one or two workshops before dropping out of the programme. In contrast, four pupils, all in Romania, attended more than the nominal maximum of 16 workshops. What appears to be a counting error is in fact explained by enthusiasm. These four pupils reportedly enjoyed their own workshop classes so much that they also attended a number of workshops in a different class. Two children attended an extra two sessions, while two other children attended seven extra sessions. Including dropouts and these “enthusiastic over-enrollers”, the average number of workshops attended across all three countries as a whole was 9.9.

28 children enrolled on the programme but attended only seven or fewer workshops (and thus did not qualify for programme completion, that is, at least 24 learning hours, the equivalent of eight sessions). Average attendance amongst this group was 3.2 workshops per child, with the majority attending two or fewer sessions. Average attendance amongst the 61 children who did attend at least eight sessions was 13.1 workshops.

Children’s attendance differed markedly across the three countries.

Montenegro

Of the three countries, Montenegro had by far the highest attendance rate. Of the initial 18 child enrollees, only two dropped out. Including these two children, the average number of workshops attended in Montenegro was 13.4. Among pupils who completed the course, attendance was very high, with a mean of 14.6 workshops. Most children missed no more than one workshop, and none of the pupils who completed the course missed more than three.

Romania

Romania showed a much broader distribution of attendance. As discussed above, four children attended more than the nominal maximum of 16 workshops. Including these children, and those who enrolled on the course but dropped out and/or attended only a small number of workshops, average attendance was 9.1 workshops. Average attendance amongst the 28 Romanian children who did attend at least eight sessions was 13.5 workshops.

Slovakia

In Slovakia, three children attended only one or two workshops before dropping out. One pupil attended four. Including these pupils, average attendance was 8.4 workshops. Of the remaining 14 pupils, all attended at least eight workshops (the minimum requirement for completing the course), with five children attending 12 or

more. Among the Slovakian children who completed the course, average attendance was 9.3 sessions. This low average is attributable to the fact that six children attended eight workshops.

Adults

A primary objective of Literacy Cubed was to provide parents, grandparents and other adults the opportunity to share in and contribute to their child's learning. In the longer term, it was hoped that this would contribute to more active involvement in the child's education, and a greater sense of agency on behalf of the adults. The programme sought to enable parents to do this in a supportive, enjoyable and non-threatening environment. This was seen as having potential long-term impacts on parents' attitudes and actions, and thus the Home Learning Environment. A key strategy in the pursuit of these objectives was the effort to encourage a high level of adult attendance. Through such attendance, it was hoped that parents would become more active participants' in their child's education.

In Montenegro, there was some success. Of the 19 Montenegrin adults who initially enrolled on the programme, 17 attended at least 13 of the 16 workshops. One adult dropped out of the programme after only one workshop, and another adult dropped out after two.

Outside of Montenegro, however, efforts at encouraging adult engagement met with limited success. This was despite efforts to ensure that adults did not simply drop their children off at the programme, e.g. providing lunch for adults as well as children. In Romania, 23 of the 25 adults who enrolled on the programme attended four or fewer sessions. 11 of those attended only one workshop. One adult attended all 16 workshops. Another exceeded even this total, joining her child in being an "enthusiastic over-enroller". In Slovakia, 10 adults enrolled on the programme. Of those 10, four attended only two workshops. No Slovakian adult attended more than 12 of the 16 programme workshops.

4.3 Learning hours

Each workshop was three hours long, yielding a total of 48 possible learning hours per person. Participants were considered to have completed Literacy Cubed if they achieved at least 24 learning hours. This threshold level was agreed on by the LIT3 project leadership team, with the aim of representing the attendance level required to reach the minimum performance for participants to be able to explain 12 out of 16 key concepts. It is anticipated that the final form of the curriculum would include a specific requirement for attendance for completion.

Table 10 provides an overview of adult and child learning hours across the three countries.

Table 10: Learning hours

	Children			Adults		
	N	Hours	Avg hours per enrollee	N	Hours	Avg hours per enrollee
MON	21	842	40	19	756	40
ROM	50	1368	27	25	255	10
SLO	18	453	25	10	131	13
Total	89	2663	30	54	1142	21

Children

Across all three countries, and including all 89 child enrollees, the programme resulted in a total of 2663 learning hours, or an average of 30 hours per child. Learning hours were calculated in terms of actual time in attendance – for example, if a pupil attended only half of a session, she received credit for only 1.5 learning hours.

The minimum number of learning hours any child had was three, reflecting attendance at one session, followed by dropout. The maximum number of learning hours was 69; this was produced by the two Romanian pupils (the “enthusiastic over-enrollers”) who, in addition to attending all 16 workshops in their own class, also attended seven in another class. More typically, the maximum expected learning hours per pupil was 48 hours: 16 sessions of three hours each. Nine pupils achieved this number of learning hours, with an additional four pupils exceeding it; thus 15% of the children who enrolled on Literacy Cubed achieved the maximum number of learning hours. 60% achieved at least 24 learning hours, the minimum requirement for course completion.

In Montenegro, the mean number of child learning hours completed was 40.1, yielding a total of 842 learning hours. This figure includes the two children who dropped out before Workshop 3. All other children completed the course. Amongst course completers, the average number of pupil learning hours in Montenegro was 43.9.

In Romania, the mean number of learning hours completed was 27.4, yielding a total of 1368 learning hours across 50 children. This figure includes all enrollees. Looking only at the 28 Romanian children who completed the course, the average number of pupil learning hours was 40.5.

In Slovakia, the mean number of learning hours completed was 25.2, yielding a total of 453 learning hours across 18 children. This figure includes all enrollees. Looking only at the 14 children who completed the course, the average number of pupil

learning hours was 30.4. The relatively low average learning hours amongst Slovakian course completers is attributable to the relatively large number of completers (six) who attended only eight sessions.

Adults

With the exception of Montenegro, adult attendance was much poorer than child attendance, leading to much lower average learning hours.

Across the three countries as a whole, the minimum number of adult learning hours was two, while the maximum (for one very enthusiastic parent) was 78. For the 54 adults who initially enrolled in Literacy Cubed, the mean number of learning hours was 21.2, yielding 1142 total learning hours. These figures include 22 adults who accumulated six or fewer learning hours – i.e. who completed two or fewer workshops. If these individuals are excluded from the figures, the remaining 32 adults average 33 learning hours each.

21 adults accumulated sufficient learning hours (24 or more) to qualify for course completion. Average learning hours for this group was 44.3 hours per adult.

While the adult learning hours were fewer than those hoped for by the programme developers, it is worth considering the baseline against which the total of 1142 learning hours is to be compared. As the programme Needs Analysis indicated, Roma adults in the three communities tend to have very limited levels of participation in lifelong learning. For many participating parents, the learning hours on Literacy Cubed would have therefore represented a large increase in the amount of learning typically engaged in.

At the national level, Montenegro had 19 adult enrollees; together, they accumulated a total of 756 learning hours, or 39.8 hours per person. Discounting the two individuals who dropped out before Week 2, the Montenegrin element of Literacy Cubed yielded 747 total adult learning hours across 17 adults, or an average of 43.9 learning hours per adult participant.

In Romania, 25 adults enrolled on Literacy Cubed. As noted above, attendance amongst these adults was low; altogether, they accounted for only 255 learning hours, or just over 10 learning hours per enrollee. Two individuals alone accounted for 116 of those hours: one completed the theoretical maximum of 48 learning hours, while the other added to this by also attending a second, concurrent Literacy Cubed programme. These were the only two Romanian adults who accumulated sufficient learning hours to qualify for course completion.

Ten Slovakian adults enrolled in the programme. For this group of adults, learning hours were slightly higher on average than in Romania: 131 hours in total, for an average of 13.1 hours per adult. However, as in Romania, only two adults managed enough learning hours to complete the course.

4.4 Course completion/dropout

Participants were considered to have completed the course if they attended at least eight full three-hour workshops, or if they accrued a minimum of 24 hours of attendance time. Theoretically, a participant could complete the course by attending 16 half-sessions, for example. In practice, partial attendance in a workshop session was very rare amongst children, albeit slightly more common for adults.

By these criteria, 61 children (69% of enrolees) completed Literacy Cubed.

As Table 11 shows, children's course completion rates differed significantly across countries, ranging from 56% in Romania to 91% in Montenegro. The completion rate in Slovakia was 78%.

Table 11: LIT3 course completion

	CHILDREN			ADULTS		
	Enrolled (n)	Completed (n)	%	Enrolled (n)	Completed (n)	%
MON	21	19	91	19	17	90
ROM	50	28	56	25	2	4
SLO	18	14	78	10	6	60
Total	89	61	69	54	25	46

Course completion was the norm for Montenegrin adults, but less common in Slovakia and was rare in Romania. In the latter country, the low rate of course completion was driven by low levels of attendance: only two adults attended more than four workshops. Both these adults attended every workshop for the full three hours (one also attended workshops for another course).

The low completion rate in Slovakia was partly attributable to adults showing up late to workshops and/or leaving early. Six adults attended eight or more workshops, meaning that if they had attended each of these workshops for the full three hours, they would have completed the programme. However, many Slovakian parents attended only parts of each workshop.

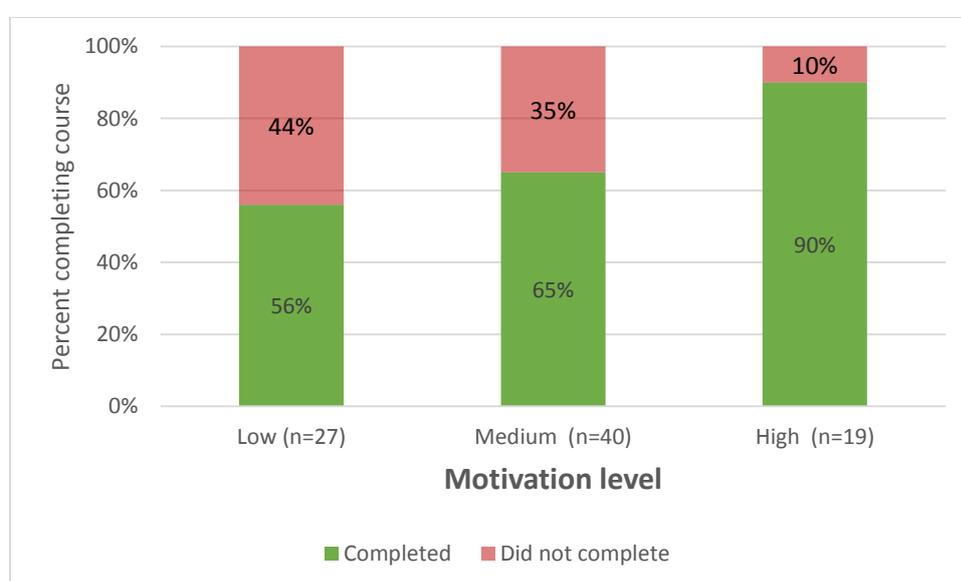
Factors associated with course completion

This section looks at factors associated with course completion on the part of children. This section does not include an analysis of adult course completion, as the single overriding factor associated with adult completion was being in the Montenegro pilot.

Relationship between learning motivation and course completion

One interesting question is the relationship between learning motivation (which was assessed by classroom teachers before the start of the programme) and course completion. To investigate this relationship, we divided children into three groups based on their learning motivation: 1) those assessed as having low or very low motivation; 2) those assessed as having medium motivation; and 3) those seen as having high or very high motivation. Figure 8 illustrates the relationship between these motivation levels and course completion. As the figure shows, the higher a child's learning motivation, the more likely that child was to complete Literacy Cubed. This was a statistically significant result (Pearson chi-square test, p-value of 0.049).

Figure 8: Children's course completion, by learning motivation



However, this relationship could potentially be explained away by cross-country differences. In particular, Montenegro had an especially high course completion rate and a relatively high percentage of pupils classified as highly or very highly motivated. As discussed above, programme staff pointed to a broad number of factors potentially contributing to the country's high completion rate, such as the long-standing relationship between programme staff and the local Roma community, and the relative lack of alternative leisure and work opportunities for refugee residents. It is possible that these and/or other factors confound the Montenegrin relationship between learning motivation and course completion. Therefore a logistic regression was run, controlling for participant country. This regression confirmed that the relationship between learning motivation and course completion was statistically significant.

Relationship between reading skills and course completion

It may also be the case that a child's reading skills influenced course completion. Reading levels (as assessed by school teachers) were therefore reclassified into

three bands, as with learning motivation. While there is some association between reading skill and course completion, this association only exists for children assessed as having high or very high reading levels. For the sample as a whole, the association is not statistically significant.

4.5 Engagement with the programme

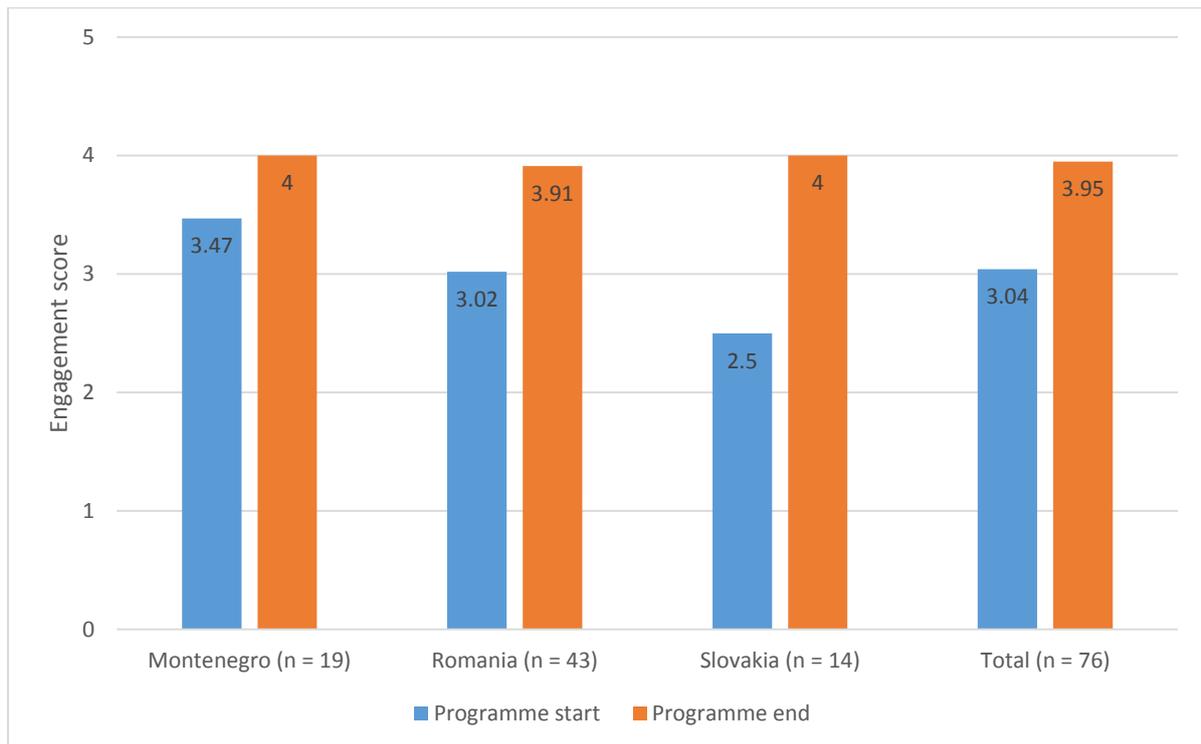
In addition to output measures of programme engagement such as attendance, we collected data on participants' perceived level of involvement with the programme. Trainers delivering Literacy Cubed were asked to rate child and adult levels of engagement in the initiative at the start and end of the programme. Participants were categorised as having one of five levels of engagement: very low, low, medium, high, or very high. In calculating levels of engagement for analysis, pupils categorised as having very low engagement were given a score of 1, those with low engagement received a score of 2, medium engagement equated to 3, high engagement received a score of 4, and very high engagement produced a score of 5.

Children

Perceived change in pupil engagement over the duration of the programme

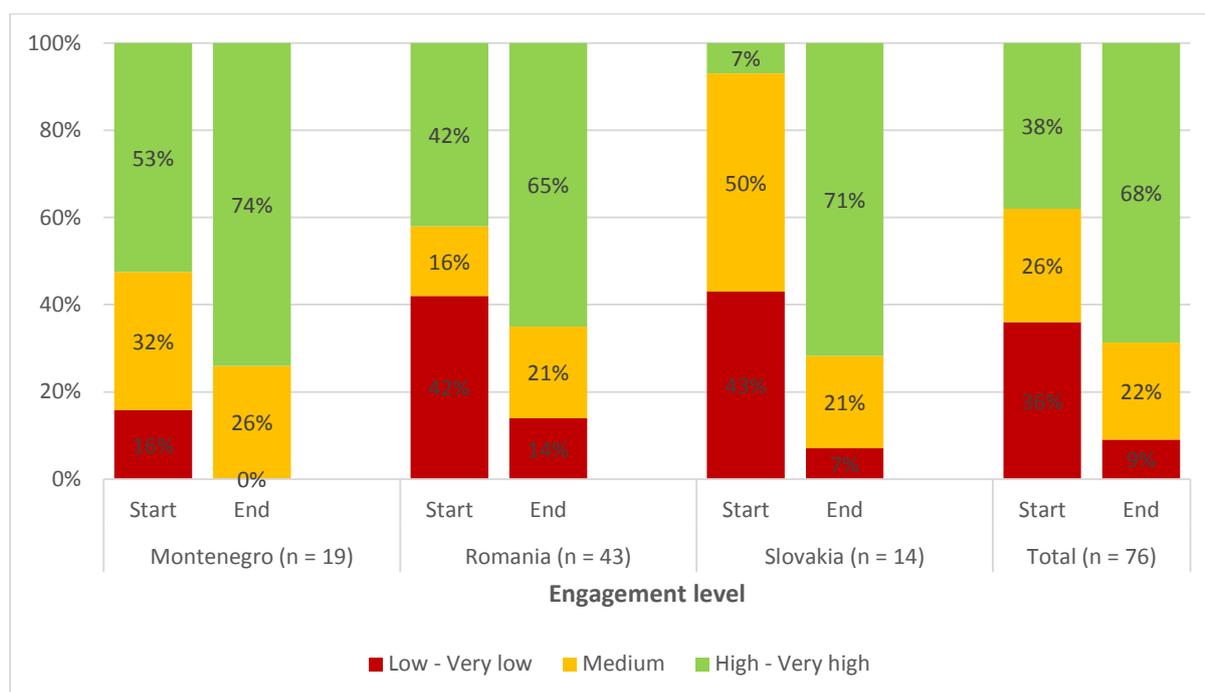
Figure 9 shows initial and final child engagement scores in all three countries, based on trainer assessments. When child engagement was assessed at the end of the programme, all three countries showed significant increases, with the mean engagement score for all three countries combined rising to 3.95. However, these increases could theoretically be due to attrition: pupils with lower engagement are less likely to complete the course. One variable of interest to us was within-pupil engagement change over the duration of the programme. That is, do pupils who complete the programme seem to grow more engaged over its duration? To address this question, we limited our sample to the 76 pupils for whom we had initial and final engagement ratings. Excluding the children for whom we had initial engagement scores but did not have Week 8 scores did not change our figures, either for the initial assessment or the final one. This suggests that pupils with lower engagement at the start of the programme were no more likely to drop out than those with higher engagement. For the children with scores at both points in time, engagement (as assessed by trainers) rose from an initial mean of 3.04 to 3.95, or just below a high level of engagement. This change was statistically significant ($p=0.000$, 95% confidence interval 0.736-1.08).

Figure 9: Child engagement in LIT3, start and end of programme, by score



Eight out of 76 pupils were seen as having very low engagement earlier in the programme; of these, seven showed an improved rating at the end of the course. And while only nine pupils were rated as having a high level of engagement at the start of the course, 28 were seen as doing so at the end. Figure 10 illustrates the perceived shift in child engagement between the start and end of the programme. In this figure, red represents low to very low engagement, Amber represents medium engagement, and green represents high to very high engagement. For each country, there are two bars: one representing the start of the programme and one representing the end.

Figure 10: Child engagement in LIT3, start and end of programme, by level



Romania

In Slovakia, only one course was offered. In Montenegro, two courses were offered: one for pupils in Year 1, and one for pupils in Year 2. While these pupils were slightly different ages, they did all come from the same site, a refugee camp. In Romania, pupils were drawn from two markedly different sites: while one group of pupils lived in the community, albeit in an ethnically Roma area), the other group of pupils lived on the local landfill. As the lives and experiences of these two different groups may be very different, it is worth looking at the two groups separately.

As noted above, Romanian children’s engagement (as assessed by Literacy Cubed trainers) rose from a mean of 3.02 earlier in the programme to 3.91 at the end. (These figures include only pupils for whom assessments are available at both points in time.) Comparing the two sites, initial mean engagement for community-dwelling pupils was much higher than that for children who lived on the landfill: 3.55 versus 2.48. This gap decreased over the course of the programme; in Week 8, the community dwelling pupils had a mean engagement score of 4.27, compared to 3.52 for children living on the landfill.

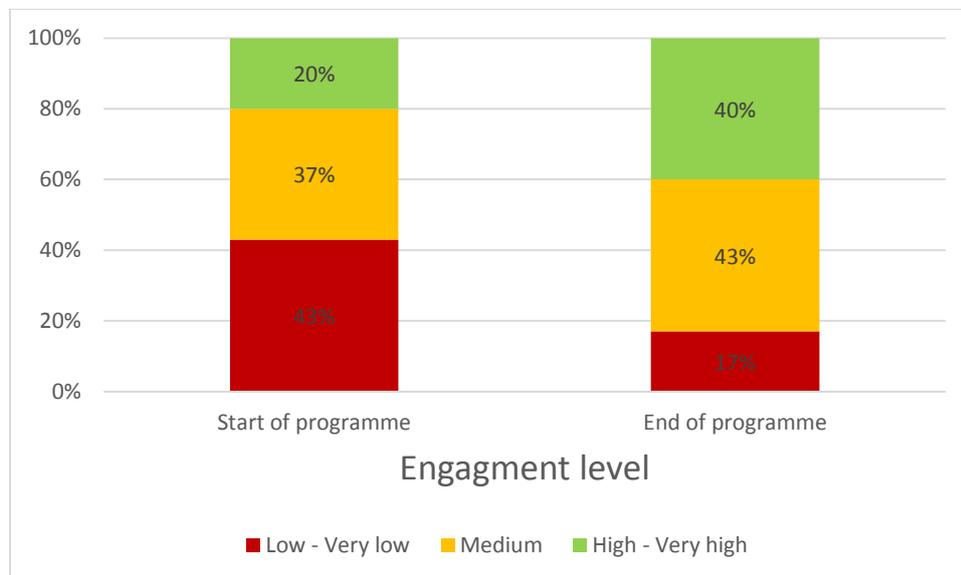
Parents

A primary objective of Literacy Cubed was to provide a programme that parents would find engaging and enjoyable. This was seen as a valuable objective in and of itself, and also as potentially valuable in the longer term, as it might encourage greater adult involvement in the children’s learning.

In Week 1, the mean parental engagement score across the three countries was 2.68, indicating an average engagement level between low and medium. By Week 8 that had risen to 2.93. However, that Week 8 figure includes adults for whom we do not have a Week 1 rating (some parents showed up for the final session only, for example). Looking only at the 30 adults for whom we have engagement scores at both points in time, the mean engagement in Week 1 was 2.73, rising to 3.37 by the end of the programme ($p=0.000$, 95% confidence interval = 0.348 – 0.919). These figures indicate that: a) adults with lower engagement scores in Week 1 were slightly more likely than their peers to drop out of the programme; and b) amongst the adults who completed the programme, engagement grew substantially over the duration of the course.

Figure 11 shows the distribution of adult programme engagement for the start and end of the programme, aggregating all three countries (n=30).

Figure 11: Adult programme engagement, start and end of the programme



Engagement ratings improved markedly over the duration of the course. Of the 30 adults who had engagement ratings at both points in time, 12 were judged to have increased their engagement by one level, and four were judged to have increased it by two levels. One adult dropped from a low level of engagement to very low.

4.6 Discussion

This section summarises key messages regarding programme recruitment, attendance and completion.

Recruitment

Looking at the factors shaping recruitment, three key issues stand out. Practitioners and/or policymakers seeking to establish a family literacy programme targeted at

Roma communities would appear to require, at a minimum (and in order of importance):

1. Well-established working relationships with the local Roma community.
2. Good working relations with the organisations supporting them.
3. A targeted recruitment strategy.

In addition, recruitment and attendance may benefit from a lack of other viable opportunities for Roma adults. As Montenegrin staff observed, many local Roma had “nothing better to do” with their time. Programmes would also likely benefit from more realistic ambitions regarding adult participation. A ratio of 1.5 adults per child seems overly ambitious. A 1 to 1 ratio would be more realistic, particularly given Roma gender norms.

To investigate why parental recruitment and attendance was high in Montenegro but low in Romania and Slovakia, programme staff from all three countries were interviewed. In two of the three countries, recruitment of adults proved to be far more challenging than anticipated. This in turn led to over-recruitment of children in order to bring in sufficient numbers of adults. When adults were successfully recruited onto the programme in Romania and Slovakia, their attendance tended to be sporadic at best. In Romania, poor recruitment of adults cannot be attributed to a lack of experience with family literacy. The Romanian programme staff had extensive experience developing and running intergenerational learning programmes, and the leader of this team has been cited as a “policy pioneer” in the field of Romanian family literacy (Carpentieri et al, 2011). Reflecting on programme challenges, she said that: “This is the first group in all of our numerous family literacy programmes where the parents have not shown up to the programme in meaningful numbers”.

Despite extensive experience in family literacy, the Romanian programme team, like their Slovakian counterparts, lacked practical experience of working with the local Roma communities. In both countries, there was also limited experience of working with organisations and/or individuals charged with supporting Roma populations.

The Montenegrin experience highlights the importance of well-established working relationships with the local Roma community. Literacy Cubed programme staff in Montenegro had many years of working with the local Roma in the refugee camp, and had built up strong relationships and a great deal of trust. This trust came from individual Roma, but also from the leaders. In Montenegro, the agreement of these leaders is essential for carrying out any programme. Another essential component of recruitment in Montenegro was the involvement of Roma mediators. Among other responsibilities, these mediators typically lead the local Roma children to school every morning. Camp residents view these mediators as role models for their children, and have confidence in them.

Because staff in Montenegro knew the local Roma community very well, they were able to engage in a targeted recruitment strategy. Recruitment efforts were focused on the families who were viewed as most likely to maintain motivation and engagement over the full eight weeks of the programme. Montenegro's very high adult retention and attendance rates are testament to the success of this strategy. However, this approach has potential implications for upscaling the programme. If the desired programme goal is to offer a programme for the most motivated Roma families in a particular area, targeting the "low hanging fruit" (i.e. the easiest to recruit and retain) is a sensible and efficient strategy. If a programme then sought to expand within the same area, however, it might face recruitment and retention challenges.

In the absence of such local knowledge and time-won trust, Literacy Cubed efforts in Romania and Slovakia might have benefited from stronger working relations with local organisations supporting Roma communities. Programme developers may struggle to develop good relations in a short period of time. It is likely the case that it is best for policy and programmes to build on longer standing arrangements, such as those found in Montenegro. And even here, it should be noted that programme staff pointed to long-standing difficulties in working with municipal authorities. Because of these difficulties, the programme team said that they typically did not seek to involve municipal authorities in Roma programmes. Rather, they relied on their already strong relationship with the local Roma.

One goal of Literacy Cubed was to include three generations of participants – children, parents and grandparents. In Romania and Slovakia, efforts to recruit grandmothers met with very little success – in these communities, grandparents were often employed (meaning they could not attend workshops) or did not have the role in their family of providing educational support.

Regarding gender, only one of the adult participants was male, and he dropped out after only one session – the Literacy Cubed programme was essentially engaged in only by female adults in the Roma communities. While potentially reflective of Roma gender norms, this experience is typical of family literacy programmes in general – with the exception of father-focused programme such as Turkey's Father Support Programme (Koçak, 2004), parents participating in family literacy programmes are almost always female (Morgan et al, 2009; Carpentieri et al, 2011). In all three countries, programme staff felt that efforts to recruit adult males were very unlikely to prove fruitful and would carry an opportunity cost, reducing the time and resources available to recruit adult females. This conclusion mirrors a more general one offered by Carpentieri et al (2011), who recommended that, with some exceptions, family literacy programmes should focus adult recruitment efforts on females.

Attendance

The previous section highlighted the targeted recruitment approach in Montenegro. In addition to recruiting families seen as highly motivated, Montenegrin programme

staff sent regular messages to families to remind them when workshops were beginning.

In Romania and Slovakia, staff highlighted the negative programme impacts of low or sporadic attendance. In Romania, for example, children who missed a number of workshops struggled to keep up and engage with the cumulative aspects of the curriculum. This finding has implications for the development of future curricula. If there is an expectation that attendance might be low, the curriculum cannot be a cumulative one: each workshop session needs to be self-contained, and capable of being participated in and understood without participation in previous workshops. Alternatively, a cumulative curriculum would only be appropriate where attendance is expected to be regular and high, such as in Montenegro.

Sporadic attendance also produced practical challenges, including the inability to predict how many lunches should be ordered for each session.

Two significant factors influencing attendance were childcare and employment. Roma families tend to have a large number of children, and fathers do not typically engage in childcare. The need to look after smaller children prevented a number of mothers from attending sessions. In some cases, mothers brought younger children with them, and programme staff or volunteers engaged in informal childcare. In Romania, there were instances of mothers bringing a number of their other children with them. These children then needed to be looked after, either by people outside the classroom, or within the classroom setting. There were instances of children “running riot”. Montenegrin programme staff cited the example of the tension between the need for childcare and the high levels of motivation of some mothers: one mother arrived at a session only two days after giving birth, and brought the newborn with her. When this mother was engaged in activities with her participating child, programme staff, including the course trainer, took care of the newborn baby.

Future programmes are likely to benefit from incorporating childcare arrangements into programme design, and publicising these arrangements to prospective participants. Programmes would also likely benefit from providing free transport to and from workshops.

In addition to childcare duties, many Roma parents and grandparents in Romania and Slovakia engage in paid labour, either in the formal economy or on the landfill. According to Montenegrin programme staff, one reason for the high adult attendance rate in that country was that refugee camp residents had few other ways of occupying their time. Literacy Cubed did not have to compete against alternatives such as employment. In the Romania landfill, on the other hand, any time spent in the programme was time that could have been devoted to earning money.

The question of what to do with one’s time is also relevant to the decision to pilot Literacy Cubed in the summer. On one hand, this meant that children had time and energy. As noted in Montenegro, they “had nothing better to do”. On the other hand,

staff in Slovakia, where Roma families tend to be better off than those in Montenegro, said that workshops conflicted with planned holiday travel. In Romania, some children and adults missed workshops in order to engage in seasonal agricultural labour.

The low attendance figures in Romania and Slovakia give rise to a question: should attendance be viewed in terms of an agreed threshold required for course completion, or should it be compared to a baseline of zero? An argument in favour of the former is that low and/or sporadic attendance produces a number of educational and practical challenges for family literacy programmes. The counter-argument is that, for this particularly disadvantaged group of adults, any attendance on an educational programme is positive – particularly when that attendance involves accompanying one's child. It is important to keep the target population in mind. It may be the case that with harder to reach user groups, it would be sensible to establish a minimum attendance requirement. However, given the barriers faced by some Roma communities, it may be more sensible and realistic to view any attendance as a positive – while of course seeking to maximise attendance. In Literacy Cubed, programme staff decided to establish a minimum criterion for programme completion: 24 learning hours (the equivalent of eight full workshop sessions). However, during the running of the programme, no potential participants were turned away because of low attendance.

Where should family literacy workshops be held?

In Romania and Slovakia, Literacy Cubed workshops were held in local schools. In Montenegro, staff had planned to hold workshops in the local school, but could not get sufficient access and therefore used a smaller facility. One could argue that schools are an inappropriate setting for a programme targeted at disadvantaged families – both because they add a potentially unwanted air of formality, and because many disadvantaged parents may view schools as an alien place, outside the parental domain. In Montenegro, for example, it is Roma mediators who typically take children to school in the morning, not their parents.

One possible theory to explain the far higher recruitment and attendance in Montenegro, is that this was related to the non-school setting. However, we do not have sufficient evidence to test this theory. As detailed above, there were very significant differences between Montenegro on the one hand and Romania and Slovakia on the other especially with regard to prior experience of working with local Roma communities. While it may be the case that the non-school setting of Literacy Cubed in Montenegro played a role in positively influencing recruitment and attendance, the magnitude of the other contextual differences between Montenegro and the other two countries make it impossible to make a judgement on the impact of setting.

Engagement with the programme

Literacy Cubed staff also noted the very positive impacts on child motivation of seeing parents read. Most children in the programme had never seen their parents read, according to trainers. When parents read out loud in the programme (albeit often with difficulty), children were astonished, and proud. This experience was seen as very rewarding and motivating for the parents, and also highly motivating for the children, who developed a new form of respect for their parents. It may be that future programmes should prioritise activities focused on influencing parental actions with regards to literacy to support long-term changes in family literacy practices.

Parents themselves reported enjoying working together as a family and creating items, such as Wordbank boxes, with children. They also enjoyed seeing their children learn through play, and appreciated it when children were able to bring something home from the programme that they had created there.

Looking to the future, it was reported that children who participated in the programme had asked repeatedly when a new set of workshops would be held; they were keen to participate further.

5. Programme outcomes/impacts

In addition to facilitating high levels of engagement during the programme, Literacy Cubed sought to achieve improvements on three outcome measures:

- i. Improve children's reading skills
- ii. Improve children's attitude to reading
- iii. Improve parents' and grandparents' confidence with regard to helping their children learn.

It was hoped that improvements in these three areas, coupled with high levels of engagement during the programme itself, would contribute to the more active involvement of parents in their child's education. While this longer term objective was not measurable within the bounds of the programme evaluation, data are available for the three "intermediate" programme objectives listed above.

5.1 Objective 1: Improve children's reading skills

This objective focuses on the perceived change in children's reading skills over the duration of the programme. Children's reading skills were rated at the start and end of the programme. At both time points, this rating was done by a Literacy Cubed trainer. Generally the same trainer provided both ratings. In assessing perceived change in children's reading skills over the duration of the programme, we include data only for the 75 pupils for whom we have initial and final trainer assessments on this measure. As in Week 1, trainers were asked to categorise children as having one of five reading levels: very low (1 point), low (2), medium (3), high (4), or very high (5 points).

Trainers perceived a marked increase in pupil reading ability: 0.85 points, or nearly a full level. This difference was statistically significant ($p=0.000$, 95% confidence interval 0.736-0.971). However, in the absence of standardised testing, this improvement clearly comes with significant caveats. It is based on trainers' perceptions, and is likely to be specific to the texts and activities focused on in the programme, rather than to reading skills more generally. Furthermore, there may be biases in trainer assessments. All trainers want to believe that their teaching has produced positive effects; therefore, there may be a tendency to give higher ratings at the end of the programme. (As noted previously, it was felt by trainers and evaluators alike that standardised testing would be incongruent with the character of the programme.) In subsequent interviews, programme trainers discussed the rationales for their ratings. A key factor was the number of new words children had learned, and which they were able to demonstrate through their ever growing Wordbanks.

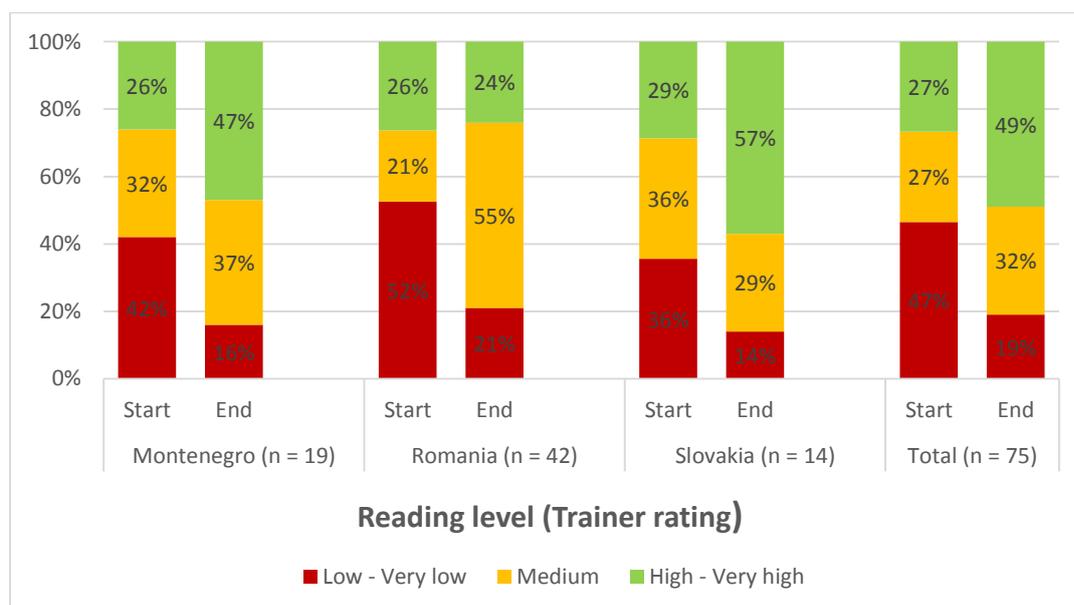
Table 12 shows the initial and final mean pupil reading scores for each of the three countries. Recall that 1 = very low skills, 2 = low, 3 = medium, 4 = high, and 5 = very high reading levels. At the start of the programme, the mean for programme participant across the three countries combined was 2.67, i.e. somewhere between medium and low. At programme end, the mean was 3.52, almost exactly between medium and high. Perceived gains were similar in each country: 0.74 points in Montenegro, 0.88 points in Romania and 0.92 in Slovakia.

Table 12: Children’s mean reading skills, start and end of the programme

Country	N	Programme start	Programme end
Montenegro	19	2.68	3.42
Romania	42	2.62	3.50
Slovakia	14	2.79	3.71
Total	75	2.67	3.52

Figure 12 shows the distribution of initial and final reading levels for pupils in each of the three countries. (These figures only include children for whom we have ratings at both time points.) As that figure illustrates, children’s reading skills, as perceived by their trainers, shifted markedly towards the positive over the duration of the programme. The fourth pair of bars (far right) illustrate perceived reading levels for the three countries combined. At the start of the programme, 47% of children were seen as having low or very low reading skills; by the end of the programme this had declined to 19%. As noted previously, trainer ratings were not based on standardised assessments.

Figure 12: Distribution of initial and final child reading levels, by country



Romania

As noted previously, programme participants in Romania were drawn from two different communities: one living in an ethnically Roma community, and the other living on local landfill. Subgroup analysis was performed on these two groups. Programme trainers rated the initial average reading ability of the community dwelling group higher than that of the landfill dwelling group: a mean of 2.95 compared to 2.29, as shown in Table 14. While both groups were perceived as having improved their reading over the duration of the programme, the gap between the two remained almost as large at the final assessment.

Table 13: Romanian children's reading scores, start and end of programme

	N	Programme start	Programme end
Community-dwelling	21	2.95	3.81
Landfill-dwelling	21	2.29	3.19
Total	42	2.62	3.50

5.2 Objective 2: Improve children's attitudes to reading

Improved attitudes to reading have been shown to lead to improved skills, which in turn tend to further improve attitudes to reading, creating a virtuous circle. When children and young people read more, they read better, even taking account of demographic and other background factors associated both with reading engagement and proficiency (Guthrie and Wigfield, 2000; Cox and Guthrie, 2001).

As noted previously, data on reading attitudes were collected in Week 1, when children were asked to choose one of three faces which best represented their attitude to reading: smiley face, a frowning face, or a neutral face. Follow-up data were collected in Week 8, when children were asked the same question.

Of the 89 children who initially enrolled, we have Week 1 and 8 data for 68. Amongst those pupils, the mean initial reading attitude score was 2.71, while the mean score at the end of the programme was 2.94. This difference was statistically significant ($p=.000$, 95% confidence interval 0.132 - 0.339).

These figures include 52 pupils who rated their initial reading attitude as positive (smiley face), and who thus could not demonstrate improvement using our metric. (Future evaluations of programmes of this nature may wish to reduce this limitation by using a wider-ranging metric, e.g. a 1-10 scale.) Of the 16 pupils who did not rate their initial reading attitude as positive, 12 rated their attitude as neutral and four as negative. Of the latter group, all four shifted their rating to neutral by the end of the

programme. All 12 of the children who initially rated their attitude as neutral shifted it to positive by the end of the programme.

The very positive reading attitudes at the start of the programme highlight another potential advantage of family literacy programmes such as Literacy Cubed: many disadvantaged children may have positive attitudes to reading or other forms of learning, but may have limited opportunities and encouragement to act on those attitudes. Family literacy programmes can provide such opportunities and encouragement.

5.3 Objective 3: Improve adults' confidence with regard to helping their children learn (Change in confidence over duration of course)

One of the key objectives of Literacy Cubed was to improve Roma parents' and grandparents' confidence with regard to helping their children learn. As noted above, confidence in this domain was assessed in Week 1, with adults rating themselves as "Not at all confident" (1 point), "A bit confident" (2 points), or "Very confident" (3 points). The same question was asked in Week 8.

Amongst the 30 adults for whom we have confidence data from the start and end of the course, the mean confidence score in Week 1 was 2.0. In Week 8, those adults' mean confidence score was 2.13. This difference was not statistically significant. (We were not able to measure perceived change for adults who did not complete the course. It is possible that their confidence did not improve, or declined.)

At the individual level:

- Six adults were very confident in week 1. In Week 8, two of these adults reported feeling only a bit confident. However, four adults who had been only a bit confident in Week 1 reported feeling very confident by Week 8.
- Eighteen adults were a bit confident in Week 1. By Week 8, four had become very confident and none had lost confidence.
- Six adults were not at all confident in Week 1. By Week 8, two of these adults had become a bit confident.

Of the six adults whose confidence appeared to improve, five were programme completers. Two were in Montenegro; these individuals accumulated 48 and 45 learning hours respectively. Two were in Slovakia; these accumulated 32 and 25 learning hours. The final two were in Romania. One of these accumulated 48 learning hours. The other Romanian accumulated only 10, so it is questionable whether or not the programme could have had a meaningful impact on her confidence.

5.4 Discussion

Literacy Cubed sought to achieve improvements on three outcome measures:

- i. children's reading skills
- ii. children's attitude to reading
- iii. parents' and grandparents' confidence with regard to helping their children learn.

Data on these measures were collected at the start and end of the programme. With regard to children's reading skills, data were based on trainers' subjective assessments. Children's attitudes to reading were reported by the children themselves, and adults' confidence with regard to helping their children learn was self-reported by the adults in question. The subjective nature of all three measures means that the usual caveats apply: any changes are perceived changes, and there are incentives for biased responses on the part of all participants. With those caveats, there is evidence of positive programme impacts. While most children began the programme with a positive attitude towards reading, there is evidence that those who did not have a positive attitude at the start of the programme did at the end. Amongst adults, there was some evidence of a small, but statistically insignificant, positive shift in confidence.

Due to the absence of standardised assessment instruments⁸ in this evaluation, it is not possible to ascertain whether or not children improved in objective terms. However, teachers were clear and felt that children had improved on the tasks undertaken in the programme. Children did appear to learn and remember new words, and programme staff felt that children's reading skills improved meaningfully over the duration of Literacy Cubed.

Suggested mechanisms included practice effects, both in terms of additional reading and in terms of specific focus on Wordbank vocabulary. It is worth noting in this context that the programme was held during the summer, so children were not practising reading in school and during homework. The relatively intensive "dose" of reading and reading-related activities that these children received from the programme may have had meaningful impacts on engagement and skill. In one country (Slovakia) there was an instance of informal follow-up of programme effects. Soon after the next academic year began, the teacher of one Roma programme participant contacted the programme to say that this child seemed to have made large gains over the summer.

⁸ In order to measure small but meaningful changes, instruments must have a fairly large number of items. However, high-item instruments can be off-putting to those with poor reading skills, particularly those enrolled on an informal, voluntary course.

6. Conclusions and implications

This evaluation focused on the Literacy Cubed's effectiveness at encouraging programme participation amongst Roma families, and achieving three overarching programme outcomes: improving children's reading skills; improving children's attitude to reading; and improving adults' confidence with regard to helping their children learn.

While recruitment of children was successful in all three countries, recruitment of adults was highly resource intensive and delivered four fewer participants than expected in Romania and Slovakia. In these two countries, even when adults were recruited onto the programme, they were unlikely to achieve sufficient learning hours for course completion. In Montenegro, in contrast, recruitment was straightforward and adult attendance was high. The key factor influencing this difference between Montenegro and the other two countries appears to be the Montenegrin programme staff's long-standing working relationships with the local Roma community. Staff from the Pedagogical Center of Montenegro (PCMNE), who developed and delivered Literacy Cubed in the Konic Refugee Camp, have worked with camp residents for a number of years across a range of projects. Over the years, camp residents have come to trust programme staff; at the same time, programme staff have developed a good understanding of which residents would most likely benefit from and engage with a family literacy programme.

Looking at the factors shaping recruitment, three key issues stand out. Practitioners and/or policymakers seeking to establish a family literacy programme targeted at Roma communities would appear to require, at a minimum (and in order of importance):

1. Well-established working relationships with the local Roma community.
2. Good working relations with the organisations supporting them.
3. A targeted recruitment strategy.

In addition, recruitment and attendance may benefit from a lack of other viable opportunities for Roma adults. As Montenegrin staff observed, many local Roma had "nothing better to do" with their time; in contrast, some adults in Romania worked, either in formal or informal employment.

Programmes would also likely benefit from more realistic ambitions regarding adult participation. A ratio of 1.5 adults per child seems overly ambitious. A 1 to 1 ratio would be more realistic, particularly given Roma gender norms.

Programme developers need a nuanced understanding of the conflicting demands on participants' time, as these demands can be significant barriers to recruitment and retention. Many Roma are employed, either in the formal or informal economies.

In summer, children may be engaged in seasonal work, meaning that participation in an educational programme comes with a high opportunity cost. According to Montenegrin programme staff, one reason for the high adult attendance rate in that country was that refugee camp residents have few other ways of occupying their time. Literacy Cubed did not have to compete against alternatives such as employment. In the Romania landfill, on the other hand, any time spent in the programme was time that could have been devoted to earning money.

Scheduling was another complex issue. Literacy Cubed programmes took place in the summer. In Montenegro this proved positive for attendance as there were no other demands on children and adults. However, in Slovakia, where Roma families tend to be better off than those in Montenegro, workshops conflicted with some families' planned holiday travel. In Romania, some children and adults missed workshops in order to engage in seasonal agricultural labour. However, summer was a good time to recruit students to work as volunteers on the programme; it might be more difficult to do so during the academic year. These differences underscore the need for basing programme design on a rich understanding of the communities where initiatives are taking place. It must be remembered that the Roma are a heterogeneous group.

Childcare was an important factor. The need to look after smaller children prevented a number of mothers from attending sessions. Future programmes are likely to benefit from incorporating childcare arrangements into programme design, and publicising these arrangements to prospective participants. Programmes would also likely benefit from providing free transport to and from workshops. Note that in Montenegro, it is standard practice for Roma mediators to walk children to school in the morning, to ensure they arrive in time.

One question with regard to family literacy programmes targeted at disadvantaged groups is where to hold sessions. Arguments can be made for and against use of local schools. The argument against doing so is that parents may see schools as intimidating or outside their comfort zones. This could negatively influence recruitment and retention. At first glance, the results of the Literacy Cubed pilot would seem to support that theory: adult recruitment and retention was much better in Montenegro, the one country where the programme was not held in a school. However, when consulted on this issue, the Montenegrin programme developers said they felt that recruitment and retention would have been just as successful even if the local school had been used. They felt that other factors, such as those discussed above, played a much greater role in recruitment and persistence. However, this does not mean that school-based settings might not reduce recruitment and persistence in other settings. It does highlight the need for a rich understanding of the local Roma community before programmes are developed and implemented.

If there is an expectation that attendance might be low, the curriculum cannot be a cumulative one: each workshop session needs to be self-contained, and capable of being participated in and understood without participation in previous workshops. Alternatively, a cumulative curriculum would only be appropriate where attendance is expected to be regular and high, such as in Montenegro.

Other key issues regarding the Literacy Cubed curriculum include: 1) how engaging it is for adults, as compared to children; 2) how best to improve health literacy and encourage positive health behaviours. With regard to the former issue, the Literacy Cubed pilot curriculum appeared to be more successful at engaging children than adults. With regard to the health-related aspects of the curriculum, it should be remembered that not all Roma have poor health literacy, and that poor health practices are typically not a product of limited health information but of difficult living conditions. A didactic approach to health literacy is unlikely to facilitate improved practices.

With regard to programme outcomes, the strength of our conclusions is limited by the validity of our data, which are either self-report or from the perspective of programme staff. Taking into account the necessary caveats regarding bias, the evaluation did find evidence of improvements in children's reading skills. Even if these gains are only context-specific, i.e. specific to the materials used in the Literacy Cubed workshops, these improvements are meaningful, particularly given these Roma children's general lack of involvement in educational activities outside of the school year (and school day). The Literacy Cubed programme appeared to be very engaging for children and some adults. Amongst children, it appeared to heighten their already positive attitude towards reading, particularly reading for pleasure in a social context. There was also evidence of the programme illustrating for parents that learning can be fun, and that parents can contribute to their child's educational development, even if parents have limited education themselves. However, due to the low number of adults who completed Literacy Cubed, we do not have sufficient evidence to judge the programme's overall impact on adults' confidence.

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Appendix 1: Methodology

Evaluation design

Mixed method studies come in a number of different designs, and exhibit a range of purposes. Greene et al (1989) produced an influential typology of the five purposes of mixed method evaluation designs: triangulation, complementarity, development, expansion and initiation. Mixed method evaluations may seek to realise only one of these purposes, or a combination of them. This evaluation realises three of these design purposes: triangulation, complementarity and expansion.

Triangulation, according to Greene et al, seeks convergence and corroboration of results from different methods. In triangulation, the same concept is investigated from two or more methodological angles in order to counteract or reduce the salience of biases and limitations associated with each method. If both methods produce the same results, the findings are more likely to be valid. In the Literacy Cubed evaluation, triangulation was achieved by drawing on quantitative and qualitative data to assess programme outcomes. For example, in addition to collecting quantitative data on participants' engagement with the programme, the evaluators also collected qualitative data on this topic from programme staff.

Greene and colleagues argue that the term "triangulation" is often used erroneously as a catch-all term when discussing mixed method research design, and that in many cases, what is called triangulation would more accurately be referred to as complementarity or expansion. **Complementarity** seeks more comprehensive conceptual understanding, and typically involves the use of quantitative and qualitative methods to investigate overlapping but distinct aspects of a concept or phenomenon. For example, in addition to collecting quantitative and qualitative data on programme participants' attitudes to reading, we also investigated the reasons underlying those attitudes and any changes in them over the duration of the programme.

Expansion designs (Greene et al, 1989) seek to extend the breath and range of a study by using different methods for different elements of the enquiry. In this evaluation, expansion was pursued through the use of quantitative methods for evaluating programme outcomes, and the use of qualitative methods to investigate programme processes.

In this evaluation, quantitative and qualitative data were collected sequentially. In particular, quantitative data were collected, and, following analysis of these data, qualitative methods were used to explore questions and interesting issues arising from the quantitative data. Quantitative and qualitative data were used together to answer evaluation research questions. The structure of the evaluation is discussed in greater detail below.

Evaluation stages and activities

Prior to the development of the LIT3 family literacy programme, a Needs Analysis (*Carpentieri, JD, Litster, J., & Mallows, D (2015) Literacy Cubed Need Analysis Report*) was conducted by IOE. This Needs Analysis included:

- A review of the international, English-language literature on Roma families and communities (conducted by the UCL Institute of Education evaluation team)
- A review of national-language research, evaluations and policy reports in Montenegrin, Romanian and Slovakian (conducted by local programme stakeholders, using instruments developed by the UCL IOE evaluation team).

National and international evidence was complemented by local-level data collection in the three programme cities: Podgorica, Montenegro; Cluj-Napoca, Romania; and Dolny Kubin, Slovakia. This data collection involved:

- Consultations with local experts, e.g. those working in Roma NGOs
- Focus groups with Roma parents
- Focus groups with Roma children
- Consultations with local schools.

In order to improve programme development, information was collected not just on Roma families' needs, but also on their strengths and interests.

Following programme development, the evaluation process began with a stakeholder meeting in Cluj-Napoca (June 2014), where the UCL Institute of Education evaluation team met with programme stakeholders (programme developers and teaching staff) to present a detailed discussion of potential evaluation aims, strategies and instruments. One of the primary goals of this meeting was to develop and begin implementing a cascaded evaluation model, in which data collection was carried out not by the UCL IOE evaluation team itself, but by local programme staff, using instruments developed by the UCL IOE team.

In Cluj-Napoca, stakeholders and evaluators discussed which aims and strategies were feasible and desirable, given the needs of the participating Roma families and the contexts in which the programmes would be run. Amongst the agreements reached were that, given the very limited formal education of most adults participating in the programme, and the aim of using the programme to present family learning as a fun, informal activity, no standardised tests would be used in the evaluation. Instead reading improvements would be assessed via the subjective perceptions of the participants, rather than through the use of objective measures. As stated above, a primary aim of this pilot evaluation was to ensure that the evaluation "tail" would not wag the programme "dog". That is, the aim of collecting valid and reliable data should be pursued through means that were not obtrusive or onerous for programme participants.

Following discussion of evaluation aims and strategies, a workshop was held with stakeholders and evaluation staff in order to develop draft evaluation instruments. A key challenge in this process was to develop data collection tools that were generic enough to be used across all three countries, but specific enough to facilitate appropriate investigation of research questions the workshop proved a fruitful exercise, as the evaluators were able to draw on stakeholders' extensive local knowledge. For example, stakeholders were able to suggest that, while participating children were likely to prefer simple 3-point Likert scales, schoolteachers typically used 5-point Likert scales and would thus prefer those.

Following this workshop, at which stakeholders were trained in data collection techniques, the evaluation team completed draft data collection instruments, which were emailed to stakeholders in each country for comment. (All data collection instruments are included in the appendices of this report.) Following these comments, instruments were revised, and final versions were sent to the key stakeholders in each country. Quantitative instruments were in Excel spreadsheet form, while qualitative instruments used Word documents.

At each programme site, data were collected during and after each programme session. These data were collected by local staff and/or, with the precise details of who collected the data differing across countries. In instances where data were collected by individuals who had not been at the aforementioned Cluj-Napoca workshop, data collection training was cascaded.

At the conclusion of the programme, anonymised data were sent to the evaluation team in London, where evaluators analysed the quantitative data in SPSS 22. This initial analysis was then presented at a programme stakeholder meeting in Bratislava (November 2014). Preliminary findings were presented, and the evaluation team raised a number of questions that this analysis gave rise to. These were discussed in an evaluator-stakeholder workshop.

At the same meeting, stakeholders gave detailed presentations about programme processes and results in each country. These presentations were followed by a workshop at which processes, outcomes, challenges, successes and other related issues were discussed in detail. Based on these discussions, the evaluation team developed a qualitative interview guide, which was then sent to stakeholders in each country in email format. Working in teams that included programme developers and teaching staff, stakeholders then provided written responses to these email interview questions. Each country also submitted revised quantitative data, with revisions addressing issues raised in Bratislava. This wave of quantitative and qualitative data was received in January 2015.

At the Bratislava project meeting, it was decided that, because of the low adult participation figures in Romania and Slovakia, home visits would be required. The purpose of these home visits, which were carried out in the first two months of 2015,

was to reach families wherein the adults could not be persuaded to attend classroom-based sessions. Quantitative data for these home visits was collected by local programme staff, and sent in anonymised form to London in March 2015.

Prior to receiving these data, the evaluation team presented mainstage programme findings to programme stakeholders and a representative of the European Commission; this presentation occurred at a project meeting held in February 2015 (London). At the same meeting, the evaluation team and stakeholders discussed key issues arising from the home visit stage of Literacy Cubed. Following these discussions, the evaluation team designed a home visit-specific qualitative email interview guide, which was distributed to local programme staff in early March. Responses to these interview questions were then analysed alongside the quantitative home visit data.

Limitations

“Wagging the dog”

This evaluation has a number of limitations. As stated above, neither the programme developers nor the evaluation team wanted the “evaluation tail to wag the programme dog”. The aims Literacy Cubed – to provide an informal, enjoyable family literacy experience – superseded the desire of the evaluation team for maximum evaluative rigour. In particular, there was no use of standardised tests for assessing literacy skills. While the evaluation did not rely on simplistic post-hoc questioning (e.g. “Did this programme improve your confidence?”), the repeated start point and end point data collection did rely either on self-report or trainers’ perspectives, both of which are likely to introduce bias.

Adult recruitment and cross-country comparison

Outside of Montenegro, the small number of adults who persisted in the programme means that it is difficult to make general conclusions about parents and grandparents. Of the 30 adults for whom we have data from the start and end of the programme, 19 were in Montenegro – thus, the data and any resultant messages may not be applicable outside of that location. As this report makes clear, while the curriculum was the same across the three countries, and there is evidence that programme staff in all three countries did a very good job, the programme experience in Montenegro was radically different from that of Romania and Slovakia. Future iterations of this programme (and future evaluations) would benefit greatly from “multiple Montenegros” – i.e. sites with high levels of adult recruitment and persistence.

Local data collection

For budgetary and language reasons, the best strategy was to utilise local programme staff for data collection. However, this approach did present challenges.

Issues of staff bias have already been discussed: it is possible that programme staff were consciously or unconsciously biased in their collection of programme outcome data, for example. Such biases would skew evaluation results.

Another challenge associated with local data collection was the occasional difficulty experienced in getting data in good time. Programme staff in some countries had to be asked repeatedly to submit their data, and missed deadlines were not uncommon.

In one instance, programme staff in one country disregarded a key data collection strategy, choosing to collect data not at the programme stages mandated by the evaluation team, but at slightly different stages. This required a slight but unwarranted adaptation of the evaluation protocol.

Appendix 2: Calendar of themes for 16 learning workshops

July – August 2014

Note: The order of themes can be changed, except workshops 1, 15 and 16.

Week 1	Workshop 1: Dreams and objectives in life (introductions through...)	Workshop 2: Who can support us to meet our dreams and objectives
Week 2	Workshop 3: How can we make use of the help received	Workshop 4: What do we need from ourselves and others to meet our dreams and objective
Week 3	Workshop 5: How education help us in life	Workshop 6: How can we make use of what school offers
Week 4	Workshop 7: How can we become as educated as possible	Workshop 8: Why it is important to be healthy
Week 5	Workshop 9: How can we maintain a good health	Workshop 10: How can we make best use of the space we have
Week 6	Workshop 11: How shall we take care of our food	Workshop 12: What can we learn in family
Week 7	Workshop 13: It's good to be different	Workshop 14: What career we would like for our children
Week 8	Workshop 15: How can we continue to read and learn in family after these workshops	Workshop 16: What did we learn during this workshops

Topics:

a. Key concept/learning outcomes in reading:

- i. Children: play to learn
- ii. Adults: parent as first teacher
- iii. All: book, informative text, story, poetry, words, school success, life success

b. Key concept in health:

- i. How to select good food and bad food
- ii. Why and when shall you go to the doctor

- iii. What to do when visiting a sick person in hospital
- iv. How to take care of skin care
- v. how to prevent dental carries
- vi. What to do for basic hygiene (hands, hair, eyes, ears, nose)
- vii. Wash fruit and vegetables.

Learning activities and strategies:

Types of learning strategies:

Read to – trainer read texts to children using methods such as predictive reading,

Read with – participants read (chain reading; pair reading etc.) This includes also reading with the reading buddies.

Interaction with text – participants discuss using reflection questions, do drawings/role playing/collage

Family Wordbank - each family will have a big box (safe like) with a smaller box for each family member inside, in which they will collect and deposit the words they learn to use independently during programme.

Literacy games/ Parent as first teacher – activities done in parallel: children will play the games with reading buddies under the supervision of the volunteer and the parents will have a conversation with the trainer about issues related to parenting and ways of being a good “first teacher” for their children.

Warm up & Reflection, workshop evaluation

Health literacy – learning activities (readings, discussions etc.) on health key concepts.

Appendix 3: Quantitative data collection fields.

DEMOGRAPHICS							
Data Field	Adult ID	Child ID	Relation to that child	Age	Family connections within group. E.g. Are they related to any of the other children or other adults?	Citizenship status (Montenegro)	Residence status (community, camp, landfill, etc.)
<i>EXAMPLE</i>	<i>M1M</i>	<i>M1</i>	<i>Mother</i>	<i>28</i>	<i>Aunt of 2 other children in group</i>	<i>Refugee</i>	<i>Camp</i>
TEACHER / ROMA MEDIATOR ASSESSMENT			ADULT				
			Home environment				
			Teacher or Roma Mediator assess parent or other adult involvement in the child's education. Very low=1 / Low=2 / Medium=3 / High=4 / Very high=5	Number of books in home (Week 1)	Where are books? Week 1 (E.g. Room or place in home)	What will you do with the books you have been given? (Final week)	Where will you put the books? (Final week)
<i>2</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>Under mattress</i>	<i>Keep them</i>	<i>Under mattress</i>	<i>Bed, School</i>		
ADULT							
Learning behaviour & attitudes							
How often does adult help child with learning? A few times a week or more = 1 / About once a week = 2 / Once a week to once a month = 3 / Few times a year = 4 / Never = 5		How important does adult think education is for child's future? Very = 1 / A bit = 2 / Not at all = 3		How important does adult think education is for child's future? Very = 1 / A bit = 2 / Not at all = 3		How confident does adult feel about helping child with learning? Very = 1 / A bit = 2 / Not at all = 3	
<i>First week</i>	<i>Final week</i>	<i>First week</i>	<i>Final week</i>	<i>First week</i>	<i>Final week</i>		
<i>2</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>2</i>		
TRAINER ASSESSMENT					ATTENDANCE		
Engagement with the programme Very low = 1 / Low = 2 / Medium = 3 / High = 4 / Very high = 5					Workshops attended out of 16		Dropped out in week?
<i>First week</i>		<i>Final week</i>			<i>13</i>		<i>Did not drop out</i>
<i>1</i>		<i>2</i>					

Appendix 4: Qualitative interview guide

Email interview topic guide – LIT3

Outcomes

- What do you think were the **most important outcomes** or impacts of the programme? Why? Can you provide examples?
- Were there any **surprising or unexpected** outcomes or impacts?

Recruitment onto the programme

- What **went well**, in terms of recruitment? Why?
- What did not go well? Why?
- How did you address recruitment **challenges**?
- Did you struggle to recruit **grandparents**, and if so, why?
- Should future versions of the programme make special efforts to recruit grandparents, or should they focus on parents?
- What **recommendations** would you make with regard to recruitment?

Parents and grandparents

- From your perspective, what are the keys to **engaging the adults**?
- What were the **barriers** to engaging them?
- **What did adults particularly enjoy** – e.g. what did they value, or find interesting or motivational?
- What did they **not like**, or find too challenging or uninteresting?
- Where **grandparents** did participate, did they seem to have a role that was different from mothers? E.g. were grandmothers important in a way that mothers were not?
- What **recommendations** would you make with regard to adults?

Teaching materials, books and book gifting

- How did you acquire or develop your **teaching materials**? E.g. did you purchase and adapt materials? Develop your own? A combination of these approaches?
- How much **time and money** did acquisition and development require? Do you have any **recommendations** regarding these processes?

- How did you acquire the **books** you gave away? E.g. were all books purchased through project funding, or were there other sources? Were you able to get books at a discount?
- Was it a **challenge** to find or choose appropriate books?
- Did families get to **choose** their books? If no, why not?
- How did families **react** to receiving the books? Were children and parents' reactions the same?
- Do you have any **recommendations** regarding book gifting?

Processes

- How well did the **curriculum** work for you and the families you taught? What were its strengths and weaknesses?
- Did you **change or adapt the curriculum** in any ways? If so, why? Did the adjustments work?
- Do you think the curriculum offered enough to parents, or was it too **child-centred**?
- Was there enough potential for **differentiation** in teaching methods, materials and tasks – e.g. for children who had different skill levels? If not, what would you change in order to improve this?
- Did the curriculum have the right **range of focuses**? E.g. should there have been more emphasis on **parent-child bonding**, or on play, or anything else? If so, what might you remove from current curriculum to make space?

- Was the programme too **intensive**, just about right, or should it be even more intensive? If you were going to redesign the programme, how many hours would you include, over how many workshops and weeks?

- Could you please explain the make-up of the **stakeholder group** and the role that this group has played in the programme? What have been the strengths and weaknesses of the stakeholder group's involvement?
- How was the stakeholder group recruited? Were there recruitment challenges?

Wordbank

- Was this an effective pedagogical/motivational tool? In what ways?
- Could it be improved?

Volunteers and reading buddies

- Could you tell us about the **roles** that volunteers and reading buddies had in the programme? What were the **responsibilities** of people in these two groups?
- How **important** were volunteers to the programme? Reading buddies? In what ways were they important?
- Can you estimate the **total number of hours** each group devoted to the project?
- Who were the volunteers and reading buddies? (E.g. University students, Year 6 pupils, etc)
- How did you **recruit** them? Were there recruitment challenges?
- Do you have any **recommendations** related to volunteers and/or reading buddies?

Other factors

- Were there **factors outside your control** that influenced programme processes and outcomes? E.g. time of the year, local politics, etc.

Country-specific question: Slovakia

- Could you please describe the conflicts that occurred with regard to the stakeholder group and other groups, e.g. the community outreach workers who appeared to see the programme as a threat?
- What were the perceived causes of these conflicts, and their consequences?
- Knowing what you know now, is there anything you would have done different with regard to the stakeholder group and other groups who are interested in the local Roma population?