



Student Dropout Prevention and Response

by CRS/Kosovo





How-to Guide Series

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Letter from CRS Education Technical Advisors

Dear friends and colleagues,

We are pleased to present the latest edition in our CRS education ‘How-to’ series: Student Dropout Prevention and Response, which was produced by CRS staff in Kosovo.

The ‘How-to’ guide series was created as an opportunity for CRS country programs and their local implementing partners to highlight and share an aspect of their work that has been particularly successful. Instead of presenting a detailed description of their program history and accomplishments, however, the focus of the guides is on the practical steps that CRS country programs and partner organizations can take to adopt similar activities. The recommendations will need to be interpreted for each particular context, but the topics addressed in each guide are ones that would strengthen and improve any existing program: how to increase child participation in programs; how to get disabled children into school; how to use adult literacy to improve rural development.

This guide from CRS/Kosovo addresses the problem of student dropout. Dropout is an almost universal problem for education systems where CRS works. And although the causes are different in each location, there are common strategies that can reduce the problem. This How-to Guide presents steps to develop strategies for both preventing student dropout and getting children who have left back into school. Implementing these strategies will not only increase the number of children in school, but will improve the quality of the schools that they attend.

Best wishes,

Anne Sellers and Eric Eversmann

Education Technical Advisors

Letter from CRS/Kosovo Head of Office

Dear friends and colleagues,

It is with great pleasure that I present to you to this How-to-Guide on Student Retention and Drop-out Prevention. The guide builds upon the joint efforts of CRS, the Kosovo Ministry of Education, and Parent Teacher Associations of Kosovo. Written by three CRS/Kosovo staff, the How-to-Guide provides interested parties with the opportunity to learn from the knowledge and experiences of CRS/Kosovo and our partners in area of student retention and dropout prevention.

This How-to-Guide illustrates a wide range of methodologies and strategies that can be applied to address dropout issues at the community, municipal and central government levels. It recommends the implementation of a joint platform for the coordination of tasks at different levels among government officials, parent, teachers and other stakeholders. The guide aims to enhance the capacities of the various groups to become involved, to respond jointly to the non-enrolment of students, and to reduce the number of students who drop out from school.

The information that follows builds upon contents from the “All in School” manual, which was produced by CRS/Kosovo and our partner organizations. Broadening the manual’s recommendations for Kosovo communities, this How-to-Guide proposes various steps for responding to general student dropout and non-enrollment cases and broader trends in a given region. I feel certain that the tips, suggestions and short activities provided in this Guide will be of use to a variety of organizations and government bodies that work with children in the area of dropout prevention. May the result be an increase in the quality and quantity of child participation in education programs around the world.

I trust that the processes suggested in this manual will build the capacities of other organizations and government bodies to address the problems leading to student dropouts their own communities. May we work together to build the quality of our school programs to better ensure the full participation of each child around the world.

Sincerely,

Florent Vranica

Head of Office CRS/Kosovo

“...a high rate of children dropping out of school threatens future economic growth and the advancement of democratic structures.”

Summary

Strong education systems in emerging democratic states and free-market economies are essential for enabling citizens' effective participation in political and economic processes. Thus, a high rate of children dropping out of school threatens future economic growth and the advancement of democratic structures. Such is the case for Kosovo, where rising numbers of children have been dropping out of school in recent years amidst the region's recovery from decades of conflict. In 2005, CRS partnered with other committed institutions to take action against such a dangerous trend. With the funding and cooperation of UNICEF, CRS and the Kosovo Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MEST) established a Dropout Task Force to begin to address the problem.

The project, Student Retention and Dropout Response: A Coordinated Effort between Government, Civil Society and Kosovo's Parent Teacher Associations, built upon six years of CRS education program implementation in Kosovo. In 1998, CRS began to actively form and support Parent-School Partnerships throughout Kosovo. As a result of CRS efforts, there are currently more than 60 school-based Parent Teacher Councils (PTCs) in Kosovo, which initially focused on school construction and rehabilitation issues. In 2002, with UNICEF encouragement (the Child Friendly School Initiative), CRS began to help PTCs shift their focus towards quality of education issues as well. With internal funding, CRS then established the Dropout Task Force in 2004, a project that continued into 2005. Initial efforts have been very successful with concrete achievements emerging, such as the work of PTCs to return 52 pre-teen girls back to school in 2004.

The most recent achievement during 2004 - 2006 was the publication of *All in School*, a manual for the Student Retention and Dropout Response Resource Kit that presented realistic approaches and strategies to decrease the number of girls and boys that drop out of school in Kosovo. The manual, produced by the Dropout Task Force, provided a clear and easy approach for schools to follow Kosovo-wide. It described eight different dropout cases that illustrated the common examples encountered by schools and communities. For each case, suggestions for immediate and long-term interventions were provided, along with general recommendations.

In addition, *All in School* aimed at the realization and implementation of a joint platform for the coordination of tasks among government officers, Parent-Teacher Associations (PTAs, regional associations of PTCs), and other stakeholders at the municipal level. The manual enhances the capacities of the different groups to become involved, to respond jointly to the non-enrolment of students, and to reduce the number of students who drop out from school.

This “How to” guide builds upon the *All in School* manual, describing the recommended steps for responding to the student dropout and non-enrollment cases and broader trends in a given region.



A girl in Pristina celebrating International Youth Day.

1. How to define dropout

Prior to creating a strategy for responding to the dropout phenomenon in a given region, the individuals addressing the problem should have a comprehensive understanding of what the term “dropout” means for their country. A concrete definition of the problem should be developed that encompasses its meaning for communities nationwide.

Efforts to create a working definition and to strategize solutions should be initiated by a committee or task force of individuals that represent both the government and civil society. The Dropout Task Force in Kosovo included four representatives of the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology and four Parent Teacher Association representatives. CRS built upon our existing partnerships with MEST and PTAs to establish the task force. A local consultant, assisted by CRS staff, facilitated the initial discussions about the dropout problem in Kosovo, while UNICEF played an advisory role throughout the entire process.

Once the committee or task force has been established, a key first step to create a working definition of dropout involves researching the different uses and meanings of the term in the documentation of national and international institutions. The Kosovo Task Force researched the term dropout as applied in legal documents and the annual reports of nonprofit institutions and government agencies, both from Kosovo and from other countries in the Balkans region.



“Stop Dropouts from Schools” is the slogan of a children’s march in Feriza/Urosevac, Kosovo.

Next, task force members should summarize the information found about the various meanings of dropout and agree upon a definition. For Kosovo Task Force members, researching the use of the term in different contexts gave them a broader understanding of the dropout problem. They learned about both the shared and distinguishing characteristics of dropout cases in other regions, and subsequently, they were able to isolate the particular traits and meaning of the dropout phenomena as it occurs in Kosovo.

The document that had the most influence on the formal definition agreed upon by the Kosovo Task Force was the directive, Administrative Instruction no. 13/2005, released by MEST in March 2005. In the document, MEST outlined measures to be taken against the parents of children not completing the compulsory level of education in Kosovo. Article 2, point 2.2, specifies the legal statute prohibiting school-age child dropouts: “the compulsory education must be attended by all children of the age specified by law, be it in public municipal school or in a private school licensed by MEST.”

The lobbying of CRS staff members and partner organizations was a significant influence on the decision of MEST to issue a specific directive condemning dropouts. Accordingly, the directive was the primary document taken into consideration when the Kosovo Dropout Task Force formulated a working definition of the term. The task force members formally defined a dropout student as “a student who does not enroll with the school or who leaves the school before the completion of compulsory education.”

“...task force members formally defined a dropout student as ‘a student who does not enroll with the school or who leaves the school before the completion of compulsory education.’”

2. How to identify causes and factors

The process of determining the causes and factors that lead to student dropouts may be one of the most challenging steps involved in developing a strategy to respond to student dropout. Qualitative and quantitative research is necessary, with the latter process being the most difficult, specifically the gathering of data and statistics on student enrollment.

“...determining the causes and factors that lead to student dropouts may be one of the most challenging steps involved in developing a strategy to respond to student dropout.”

In regions emerging from conflict and disaster situations, such as Kosovo, many families have fled from home communities and may or may not eventually return. Very often, small villages have been destroyed, and families decide to relocate to urban areas with more resources and economic opportunities. During such a period, parents may not follow official procedures for withdrawing their children from school, and thus school administrators may be unable to gather reliable and accurate enrollment information.

To avoid extensive obstacles and time wasted in deciphering statistics, task forces can select a number of target schools to serve as sources of data and subjects for future studies. Important characteristics of the school selection may include:

- The existence of parent/teacher advisory structures in the school and broader community with an established history of collaboration;
 - Geographic and socio-cultural diversity;
 - Demonstrated high population of at-risk dropout students;
 - Previous involvement of CRS in the community.
-

The Kosovo Task Force selected 20 schools from which to gather data and to use in the development, testing and enhancement of the Resource Kit. The schools all had existing Parent Teacher Councils and were located in the 5 municipalities where CRS has supported the creation of municipal Parent Teacher Associations: Lypjan, Malisheva, Prizen, Ferizaj and Dragash. Additional selection criteria of the Kosovo Task Force included a focus on schools in communities identified as high-risk for dropout problems, specifically those with a high concentration of minority Roma, Ashkalija and Egyptian children and with a high number of dropouts in the past.

Once pilot schools have been selected, members of the dropout committee or task force can begin efforts to collect information regarding student enrollment. The ministry of education and local municipal offices of the given area may already possess accurate statistics. However in the experience of the Kosovo Task Force, many problems arose in this process due to a lack of census data and faulty school records. An estimated 20% of possible dropout cases required additional research by task force members, consisting of door-to-door visits to ask families about the enrollment status of their children.

After sufficient information has been gathered about the different cases, common factors that lead to student dropouts can be determined. In addition, qualitative research involving interviews and group discussions is integral to uncovering the causes and factors that influence variations in a child's enrollment in school. The Kosovo Dropout

“Once pilot schools have been selected, members of the dropout committee or task force can begin efforts to collect information regarding student enrollment.”

“The most common factor of high influence throughout Kosovo and other Balkan countries was found to be challenging economic conditions.”

Task Force conducted focus group sessions to help identify local issues and problems, as well as assisted in a Kosovo-wide qualitative survey conducted by UNICEF and MEST. A local consultant contracted by CRS then facilitated a workshop to help task force members synthesize the data.

In the UNICEF and MEST study, difficult economic conditions, lack of interest from children, and early child employment were found to be the primary causes influencing the school dropout of boys and girls (UNICEF and MEST, 2004, p. 4). These and other factors, such as attitude toward education, geographical position, and various discriminations, vary in their level of influence depending on the geographical, economic, cultural and social characteristics of different regions. In the municipality of Prizren, which has the largest number of school dropouts, economic and social factors were listed as main reasons; while in the municipality of Dragash, the geographical characteristics of the area was found to be a primary factor influencing dropouts. The most common factor of high influence throughout Kosovo and other Balkan countries was found to be challenging economic conditions.

The Kosovo Task Force listed in the Resource Kit all variables revealed in their research to be possible causes of student dropout or non-enrolment. They separated the factors into four categories: individual (such as bad health or early marriage), family (such the internal displacement of families or level of parents' education), school (such as gender discrimination or low teacher salaries), and society (such as too few schools or a lack of cooperation between communities and institutions).

3. How to identify characteristics of children at risk of dropping out

Although it is important to identify the reasons that children drop out of school, it is often beyond the scope of our education projects to solve these problems. For example, many children drop out of school because of poor economic conditions, which are difficult or impossible for us to change in time to keep a child in school. For this reason, the most successful programs combating dropout try to identify the signs that a child may be dropping out and intervene before that happens.

It is often said that prevention is more effective and less costly than treatment. In order to prevent a phenomenon such as dropouts, it is crucial that the target group is known. Questions to ask include: With whom are we dealing? Who are we trying to prevent from dropping out? From their research and combined experience, Kosovo Task Force members were able to specify some common features of children who may be inclined to or in danger of dropping out of school.

“...to prevent a phenomenon such as dropouts, it is crucial that the target group is known.”



Roma Children wait to enter a school in Plimentina Camp, in Kastriot/Obilic, Kosovo.

Telltale signs of potential student dropouts include:

- Irregular school attendance;
- Insufficient success in studies;
- Non-completion or irregular completion of homework;
- Aggressiveness towards teachers and other children;
- Being shut out by others and/or loner tendencies;
- Family is new to neighborhood, i.e. child is new to school;
- Family is poor;
- Alcohol use, substance abuse, smoking;
- Perceived inferiority on the part of the child;
- Association with strangers during school hours;
- Lack of concentration;
- Disobeying school rules;
- Anti-social behavior (impolite, rude, disruptive, etc);
- Tardiness to class;
- Skipping classes;
- Non-participation in class or school-organized activities;
- Association mainly with adults.

The experience of PTAs in Kosovo points to the unfortunate reality that, in many instances, interventions to keep a child in school come too late in dropout cases. Late intervention decreases the chances for successful resolution of the process, so teachers and school administrators are encouraged to intervene early. When students demonstrate several of these characteristics, measures should be taken immediately in accordance with regulations to help prevent the children from becoming dropouts. Naturally, human behavior is oftentimes difficult to assess accurately, and identification of such situations should be performed with a high degree of care, caution and sensitivity.

4. How to create a strategy for a solution

After common causes, factors and characteristics of student dropouts have been identified, further steps can be taken to determine appropriate methods for dealing with specific cases. The assistance of an expert, such as the consultant who worked with the Kosovo Task Force, can be extremely helpful in carrying out this strategizing phase of the process. To facilitate the process of conceptualizing solutions, the consultant created eight different narratives that together illustrated a majority of the causes and common characteristics of dropouts in Kosovo. A workshop then was held, during which Kosovo Task Force members split into working groups and brainstormed solutions to each separate case. (These eight narratives and the solutions are included as case studies at the end of this guide.)

After a series of additional workshops, the Kosovo Task Force drafted the Resource Kit manual with the help of the consultant. Such a document helps the different stakeholders involved to better understand that a generic solution for keeping a child in school does not exist; each case requires a different strategy. The manual recommends a three-step intervention approach to support a child who is at risk of dropping out:

- 1. Support:** Immediate contact made with the school Dropout Prevention and Response Team (DPRT) to begin understanding the situation more clearly (see DPRT description below for more information about the teams);
 - 2. Working Plan Draft:** Exact identification of the specifics of the case, assigning of tasks, and development of a coordinated plan (including responsibilities, expectations and terms);
 - 3. Working Plan Implementation:** Contacting the student, family, teachers, student council, friends, etc, to begin applying strategies in the manual and finding a realistic way to keep the child in school or to bring the child back to school.
-

5. How to implement the strategy

Developing effective strategies for intervention requires the joint participation of the government, school administrators, parents, teachers and students. For CRS Kosovo, the initiation of collaborative work with these key individuals, in cooperation with donor organizations, has proven to be critical for the dropout program's success.

Dropout Prevention and Response Teams

The creation of Dropout Prevention and Response Teams (DPRT) was central to the strategy in Kosovo. The DPRTs operate at school level and at community level as needed. These teams are not intended to be a formal structure of schools. In Kosovo, a certain team will become active when school officials or community members think that there exists a possible case of non-enrolment or dropout and subsequently will contact the local DPRT members.

“...teams are comprised of active teachers, parents, community members, municipal officers and students.”

The teams are comprised of active teachers, parents, community members, municipal officers and students. Core team members of the PTAs take the initiative to establish DPRTs, in cooperation with governing school structures in schools where they are operational, namely the PTC members, school principal, administrative council and students' council. Upon receiving information about a school dropout case, the primary task of a DPRT is to apply materials and methods from the strategy package to address the particular case.

The school dropout issue is a concern of the community; therefore it requires a special commitment from the community members in the field, especially in areas with large numbers of minority children. DPRTs help to foster this level of commitment in their respective communities.

The tasks and responsibilities of DPRTs include:

- Communication with students, parents, and teachers for identifying dropout cases.
- Development of a work plan, which involves the assigning of tasks, responsibilities, expectations, timelines, etc.
- Gathering information from other stakeholders in the process about the case/cases, such as the Principal, PTC, PTA, etc.
- Implementation of work plan by establishing contact with student(s), family, teachers, students' council members, peers, etc.
- Coordination of further actions with these stakeholders.
- Implementation of strategies included in the manual, the ones which are more appropriate in a given situation, or utilisation of other strategies which may come from different team members.
- Maintaining constant contacts, not only in an informative nature, with the stakeholders in the process, be it through formal or informal meetings.
- Reporting for the work carried out to PTCs and PTAs.
- At the beginning and end of the school year, the team maintains more regular contacts during these periods and intensifies its work in terms of keeping records for enrolment.

A Note on Problem-solving Strategies

The development of strategies to address the broader dropout problems for a community, as well as specific cases of children leaving school, requires the use of critical problem-solving skills and methods. The strategy for resolving a problem means finding a solution in a careful and meaningful way. It roots out the chance that something will happen or will come up from an entirely occasional and groundless assumption or supposition (De Bono, 1984).

The Kosovo Task Force took into consideration the two categories of problem-solving strategies for addressing dropout problems.

- 1. Immediate Specific Strategies:** these are instructions or unique strategies created quickly for a specific intervention. After becoming familiarized with a problem's issues and determinants, it is then possible to develop immediate strategies for resolving the problem. The successful resolution of a problem depends on gathering insights and recommendations from others involved in the situation (Bransford & Stein, 1993). The cases listed in the Resource Kit manual first give recommendations that apply this method of problem solving. For example, a specific strategy for a child that drops out due to the extensive criticism of a teacher would involve efforts to improve the teacher's approach and communication styles.
- 2. Long-term General Strategies:** these are principles and instructions that can be carried out over a long period of time to prevent similar cases (or the re-occurrence of a specific case) from happening in the future. Dropout strategies of this kind include the development of additional extra-curricular activities and the creation of a safe school environment.

For members of DPRTs and other stakeholders involved in responding to dropout and non-enrollment cases, the Kosovo Task Force has compiled a list of critical problem-solving characteristics:

- ✓ Keeping a positive attitude.
- ✓ Having a concern for accuracy.
- ✓ Being able to break a problem down into parts to make it easier to understand and to facilitate its resolution.
- ✓ Avoiding guessing and taking concrete measures that will produce results.
- ✓ Being open-minded and nonjudgmental

The following Case Studies present solutions that were proposed to the various causes of dropout in Kosovo. As noted above, each case will require its own particular solution. At the same time, however, this guide recommends the following strategies to reduce the dropout phenomenon in general:

General recommendations:

1. **Carry out a census**, which would give a clear picture of the dimensions of the school dropout phenomenon, to assist in the establishment of a stable and accurate country-wide data system.
2. **Draft state policies** addressing the issue of school dropouts.
3. **Complete the legal package**, which would facilitate the scope of participants in the campaign.
4. **Raise awareness** in the community about the dropout phenomenon through workshops, programs, campaigns, etc.
5. **Develop an action strategy plan** on the municipal or school level.
6. **Engage civil society** to be more active in addressing such phenomena.
7. **Engage broadcast and print media**, to provide coverage of the dynamics of this issue, thus raising awareness and increasing interest on a wider scale to address the problem.
8. **Prepare a specific approach** for minority communities, taking into account and respecting the specific characteristics of each population.
9. **Increase the role** and importance of parent-teacher associations.
10. **Increase cooperation** at the municipal and central levels.
11. **Implement laws** on compulsory education.



*Youth Activity in Mitrovica, Kosovo
(monitoring of daily newspaper).*

Case Study 1* *Andi: Questioning the Value of School*

Andi is a quiet child, but he also likes to socialize with children older than him. He meets them almost every day, and he has even tried to smoke a few times, although he did not like it. Two members of the group want to drop out and start selling things at the market. They think that in this way, they will become independent and will not be forced to do what the others tell them to do. Ultimately, even if they finish school, what awaits them in the future? Andi likes this ...

What can we do? What should we do?

Immediate Specific Response Strategy:

- The head teacher could talk to the student in an open, sincere and tolerant manner to find out why the student is behaving in this way.
- Such a conversation can be organized with the student's family (parents), thus bringing the school-family cooperation to a higher level and involving all relevant actors in preventing this potential dropout case.
- In addition, Andi's friends can be included in the conversation, since they are also at risk for dropping out of school.
- The student's classmates could be encouraged by the head teacher to include him in a working group for which he holds certain responsibilities for a short period of time, thus keeping him occupied with positive activities.
- The head teacher could organize a joint discussion in school with the student's family, an important relative or another influential person.

* All case studies are fictional.

Long-term General Response Strategy:

- Different extra-curricular activities can be organized in which all students are encouraged to take part, such as a sports match between classes, a class concert or theatrical improvisation skits. The goal is to involve all students and assure that each student has a responsibility in these activities. The students thus will feel closer to school and their classmates, and they will think of school as not just a place for studying, but also a place for fun. Each student will be entrusted with responsibility and given an opportunity to know that she or he provides value and is valued.
- Other activities can be organized with the main topic being human rights, specifically the rights and responsibilities involved in education. Through working groups, the students themselves can discuss related topics such as smoking, use of alcohol, drugs and the forced employment of children, followed by presentations in which the students can present their own thoughts.
- Open discussions with the public can be organized by different education leaders, such as principals, members of the PTA, officials from the local or national education departments, etc. The talks can tackle direct questions by community members regarding leisure activities and various other education issues.
- Meetings for students can be arranged with important people of different fields who can serve as role models.

Recommendations for Schools, Communities and other Local Stakeholders:

- The problem should be treated with a great deal of tolerance and understanding, so that through tactful discussions with the student and others involved, the underlying causes will effectively be revealed.
 - The phenomenon of dropouts should not be considered a seasonal problem, and prevention strategies should be applied all year long.
-

Case Study 2* *Bekim: Leaving School to Help at Home*

Bekim's family moved to the town a few years ago. His parents have many difficulties in finding jobs. There are five children in the family, and Bekim, as the oldest son, feels that he should help out his parents. He has decided to go to the market to work, despite the fact that he is very unhappy to leave school and friends. Bekim hopes that maybe this will only be a temporary solution until one of his parents finds a job ...

What can we do? What should we do?

Immediate Specific Response Strategy:

- Knowing the grave economic conditions of the student's family, the teacher in cooperation with the school administration can solicit funds for modest financial assistance for the family, either through a campaign or a humanitarian organization.
- Talk with the student's parents to discuss the possibilities of finding employment for the parents instead of the student.

Long-term General Response Strategy:

- Try to acquire assistance for students' families going through difficult economic situations through cooperation with various humanitarian organizations until another long-term solution (employment, etc.) is found.
- The community or the school in cooperation with the PTAs can organize fundraisers to provide assistance for poor families.
- Raising awareness among local business leaders may bring support for some of these families, thus reducing the risk of school dropouts.

* All case studies are fictional.

Long-term General Response Strategy (cont.):

- In cases where children have no choice but to work, organize “catch-up classes” for them in order to keep them close to the school until the problem is resolved.
- Increase cooperation between governmental bodies (such as the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare), making it possible for these families to benefit from a social assistance scheme for a certain period of time.
- Motivate parents to participate in their children’s education through close school-family cooperation. Successful implementation of this cooperation reduces the risk of a student dropping out.
- Encourage and support various programs and associations that have positive impact on the quality of education.

Recommendations for Schools, Communities and other Local Stakeholders:

- Treat the issue of school dropouts as a community-wide economic and social problem.
 - Decentralize the budget at all levels, thereby creating possibilities for the easier administration of funds to address specific and urgent needs.
 - Develop programs to emphasize and increase awareness of the importance of preparing children for education at an early age (Schweinhart & Weikart, 1985). Pre-school education prepares children to go to school and decreases their likelihood of dropping out.
-

Case Study 3***Diana: *Falling Behind in Her Studies***

When the teacher lectures, Diana tries so hard to understand, but she feels it is useless. At home she tries to read to catch up, but she just can't seem to follow along as her classmates do. The teacher always criticizes and insults Diana, telling her that she doesn't understand and knows nothing... and in the end, for his salary, why should he have to bother with her? Diana feels so bad and ashamed... she would rather not come to school at all.

What can we do? What should we do?**Immediate Specific Response Strategy:**

- Talk to the student to understand her reason for dropping out of school and once this is identified, try to manage the situation.
- Talk with the student's family in order to create an encouraging academic environment at home.
- If necessary, transfer the student to another class upon careful analysis.
- Organize a discussion between the student's teacher and school's director or head teacher, with the goal of guiding him to improve his attitude and communication style with the students.

Long-term General Response Strategy:

- Organize various trainings or seminars for teachers regarding changes in teaching philosophy to increase their professionalism.
- "Complaints and Suggestions Mailboxes" can be set placed in school hallways, through which very useful information may emerge regarding problems that need to be addressed by school administrators.

* All case studies are fictional.

Long-term General Response Strategy (cont.):

- Increase monitoring of teachers and school administrators by the officials of municipal and national education departments.
- Train a group of teachers that are interested in working on dropout cases.
- Organize a workshop for all the students in the school that would discuss the topic of “multiple intelligences.” The workshop would help all students to understand that their intelligence may take many different forms, perhaps in some ways that are not evident in the classroom. At the same time, such a workshop would help to improve the climate of cooperation in the classroom.
- Involve the presence of a psychologist in the school to help identify and resolve problems.
- Instruct parents on how to provide “additional classes” to assist their children in different subject areas.

Recommendations for Schools, Communities and other Local Stakeholders:

- While the state of the education system is not favorable to teachers today, motivated people can aid in the reform process. The careful review and consideration of the teachers’ situation, in addition to the monitoring and serious evaluation of their work, would have a positive impact.
 - The organization of seminars and various trainings by the ministry of education and NGOs, as well as the creation of possibilities for advancing teachers’ education, would raise the professional level of teachers.
-

Case Study 4***Ana: Afraid to Walk to School**

Ana's family has settled in an isolated neighborhood of the town that is quite a distance to the nearest school. Neighbors told her parents that several girls have been abused by troublemakers, who have yet to be caught by the police. Ana is 14-years-old, and after hearing the story, her parents are reluctant to allow her to continue walking to school. What should they do with her? The school is far away, and Ana is still young. What if the same situation happens to her? Should they not send Ana to school at all?

What can we do? What should we do?**Immediate Specific Response Strategy:**

- The parents or the school, in cooperation with the PTAs, can organize travel to and from school for groups of students that live close to each another.
- The school can have a conversation with parents to figure out a method for providing security on the way to and from school.
- Talks and meetings can be organized with the parents of the children that pose a risk for other students' safety.
- With the PTAs support, the school can find the possibility to establish a "security" body at school, until another long-term solution is found.

* All case studies are fictional.

Long-term General Response Strategy:

- Build cooperation with other government offices, such as the city police, to provide patrols that can monitor children's routes to school each day.
- The ministry of education can organize transportation for distances over 5 km in each region.
- Create safe school environments.

Recommendations for Schools, Communities and other Local Stakeholders:

- Construct more schools to serve children in remote areas.
- Create a physically safe environment for students and require school safety regulations.



Ashkali and Egyptian children in front of school, Settlement "Kolonija" in Gjakova/Djakovica, Kosovo

Case Study 5***Drita: Teased for Being Different**

When Drita was very young, she suffered an illness that physically disabled her. As a result, she requires more care than most children. Drita's family is poor, but they provide her with support. In school, however, some of her classmates treat her differently – they insult her and tease her because of her disability. Drita cries and thinks that perhaps it would be less painful not to come back to school.

What can we do? What should we do?**Immediate Specific Response Strategy:**

- Organize a discussion with the disabled student and the parents to ensure them that the school is an open place for all children, that all are equal and welcome.
- Organize meetings with all parents to discuss the process of integrating disabled children. This would help increase awareness among parents and children on the right to an equal education for all boys and girls.
- Organize a discussion with students on the topic, “All children are equal and have equal rights.”

Long-term General Response Strategy:

- Create an inclusive environment in which all children would feel they are treated as equals.
- Increase the awareness of teachers on an equal approach to educating all children through trainings on all-inclusive education.
- Organize sport and cultural activities at which every child will have a certain role and responsibility according to his/her abilities.

* All case studies are fictional.

Long-term General Response Strategy (cont.):

- Complete detailed curricula for all by engaging experienced special education teachers to take the lead in this process.
- Adjust the study contents to meet the needs of individual students.
- Issue administrative regulations and instructions that are non-discriminating in education, within the universal education system.
- Provide transport for children with special needs to facilitate their full integration into society.
- Incorporate multiple intelligences in curricula, based on the principle that all children are intelligent (Musai & Vrapı, 2003).
- Create a physical environment in schools that provides access for physically disabled students, such as paths that enable easy entrance to and exit from the school.

Recommendations for Schools, Communities and other Local Stakeholders:

- Build the capacities of key actors on the topic of special needs education.
 - Provide adequate educational support for all children.
 - Draft administrative instructions for children with special needs.
 - Create extra-curricular groups in which children with special needs have more room to discover their unique skills.
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Case Study 6***Burim: Can't Attend School Activities**

Burim likes that his school always organizes different activities. They are colorful, and he would very much like to take part in them. His friends tell him that they always have fun in those kinds of activities. But Burim has never taken part in them. His family doesn't allow him to go, and neither his mother nor father ever attends ...

What can we do? What should we do?**Immediate Specific Response Strategy:**

- Send formal invitations to all parents that request their presence and participation in a school meeting at which they can discuss various topics concerning the school and the students.
- Engage parents to recommend ideas on potential activities that can be organized by parents for teachers and students.
- Talk with parents in order to improve the school-family cooperation and their involvement in school-organized activities.

Long-term General Response Strategy:

- Increase school-parent cooperation through various programs that motivate parents to take part in all levels of their children's education.
- Organize sports or cultural events, in which the parents are included and have various responsibilities (construction of a sports arena, assisting in preparing various concerts, funds collection, etc).
- Organize workshops for parents on the topic of children's rights.

* All case studies are fictional.



Students congregate a table outside a school in Savrove.

Long-term General Response Strategy (cont.):

- Organize extra-curricular activities in which the parents are involved.
- Increase participation of parents in school issues such as curricula, class scheduling, fundraising and leisure activities.

Recommendations for Schools, Communities and other Local Stakeholders:

- Expand the diversity of activities by creating a chance for participation of all children.
- Organize parent-children debates on various topics with the purpose of creating a spirit of discussion and closer cooperation.
- Develop more effective Parent-Teacher Councils.

Case Study 7*

Anita: Walking to School Alone

Anita's village has no school. The village children have to walk several kilometers to the school in another village. At the beginning of the academic year, Anita walked to school with one of her friends, Vjosa. But just recently, her friend's mother became seriously ill, and Vjosa had to stay at home to take care of her. Now Anita has no one with whom she can walk to school. Since it is located so far away, she is thinking of leaving school...

What can we do? What should we do?

Immediate Specific Response Strategy:

- Talk to the student's parents to organize a group with whom the students can walk.
- Talk to the family of the child with the ill mother. Perhaps a solution can be found in which other family members (who do not have school or employment obligations) could care for her.
- Talk to both students in order to prevent them from dropping out.
- Engage key persons such as the school director, the clergyman of the region, the head of the village, or a relative with authority in the family to talk with all family members and convince them not to let the girls drop out of school.

Long-term General Response Strategy:

- The municipality and ministry of education can collaborate to provide organized transportation.
- Create strategies to include parents in educating their children.

* All case studies are fictional.

Long-term General Response Strategy (cont.):

- Through the work of the principal and ministry of education, distance learning can be organized. Teachers can be paid for such efforts.
- Engage teachers in rural zones in adult and community education, and offer other programs that specifically respond to the needs and interests of rural communities.
- Create a transportation network for students from rural zones and the suburbs to increase school attendance by these children.

Recommendations for Schools, Communities and other Local Stakeholders:

- Build necessary school institutions in heavily populated areas.
 - Review planning of education for upper grade levels.
 - Determine forms of non-formal education for specific cases
 - Increase the role of the school in issues of rural development.
 - Encourage parents, especially those of rural areas, to take a more active role in educating their children and in preventing dropouts.
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Case Study 8**Vlora: Facing Multiple Challenges*

In Vlora's family, there are six children and neither her father nor her mother works. Each day, the children must go out and beg, for their economic situation is really desperate. Vlora will get married in September, therefore she will not be able to attend school any longer. But even in the past, Vlora and her two brothers never regularly attended school because they always had to beg...

What can we do? What should we do?**Immediate Specific Response Strategy:**

- Talk to the girl to see if it is somehow possible for her to attend school.
- Talk to the girl's parents to raise awareness that prior to marriage, she must first complete school so that she and her future family can have a better life.
- Organize a meeting for the parents with a key influential community member.
- Contact community leaders to influence the family in ways other than those involving their economic situation.

Long-term General Response Strategy:

- Work through various programs to raise awareness in different communities regarding compulsory education.
- Involve the whole community in school activities.

* All case studies are fictional.

Long-term General Response Strategy (cont.):

- Investigate possibilities to provide material assistance to such families in difficult situations through cooperation with NGOs, local business owners, etc, or search for an opportunity for the employment of one parent.
- Organize local activities to raise awareness among parents and community leaders regarding their role in children's education.

Recommendations for Schools, Communities and other Local Stakeholders:

- Organize literacy campaigns, especially keeping in mind that levels of illiteracy are high among minority populations.
 - Organize media campaigns to raise awareness regarding schooling for minorities within their own communities and within the society at large.
 - Improve coordination among all stakeholders to increase the chance of success in these activities.
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