

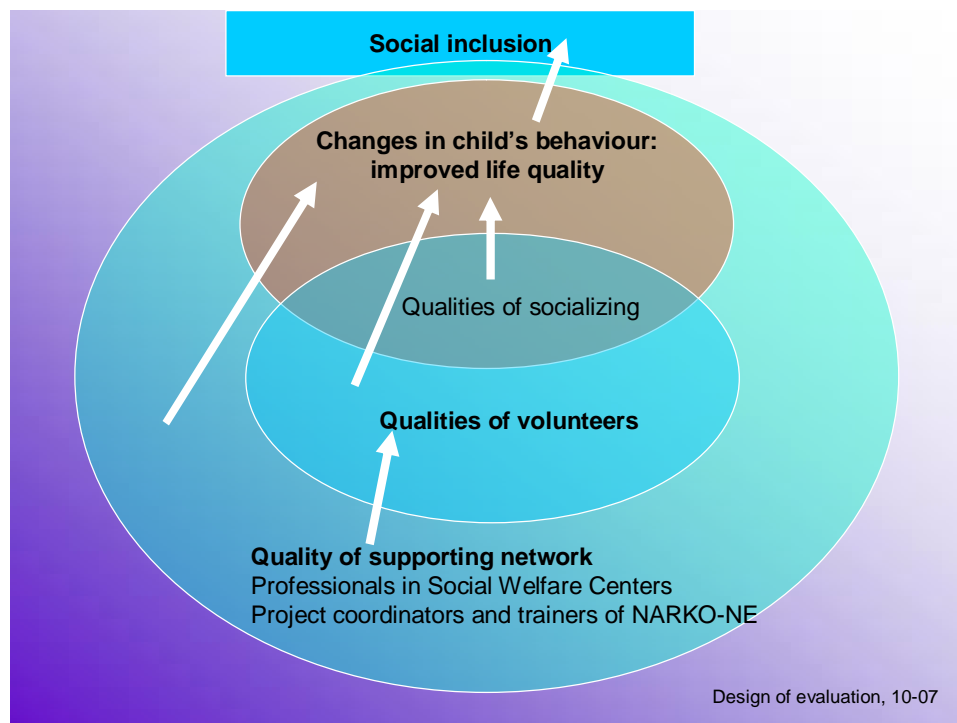
Some Conclusions from Evaluation Report of "Older Sister, Older Brother" Project, January, 2008

Two professionals evaluated the project "Older Sister, Older brother"¹ in January, 2008. The goal was to see to what extent this project has contributed to the social integration and healthy personality development of children growing up in a difficult social environment. Through 25 interviews, 18 of which were made with student-child "sibling pairs", three basic factors were documented which have been essential to the project's success:

- a) change in the children's behaviour,
- b) motivation of volunteers,
- c) cooperation between NARKO-NE and government social centres.

To a) It was possible to document the success of the project for the children in an impressive way

To b) Cooperation between the NGO NARKO-NE and government social centres in support of the goals of the project can be considered adequate under present conditions (see Annex, summary of evaluation)



In regards to b) Motivation of volunteer students

18 students were evaluated, 17 women and 1 man; they are between 22 and 28 years old; 14 of them are already participating for the 2nd or 3rd year.

¹ NARKO-NE launched the "Big Sister/Brother" project in May, 2004 in conjunction with the social centres of Sarajevo Canton (Croatian/Muslim) and of Serbian Sarajevo. In the meantime, 130 children and young people growing up under particularly precarious circumstances (living in poverty, experience of violence, loss of parents in early childhood, invalid, traumatized, or unemployed parents, problems with alcohol, delinquency, social exclusion, etc.) have been provided with a "big sister" or a "big brother". This "sibling pair" meets regularly to plan and carry out activities together. The "big sisters and brothers" are students at the ethnically segregated universities of Sarajevo and of East Sarajevo/Pale and their work is on a volunteer basis. Workers at the social centres where the children's parents are clients accompany and advise the volunteers. The head of the NARKO-NE project, a young woman social worker, as well as her assistant, a student of psychology and education, and the 12 volunteer members of the contact group who are working in their 2nd or 3rd year, coordinate and organize training and continuing education, supervision, group activities, management, and administration.

For 2007/2008, 41 psychology, education, social work, etc. students have volunteered, 38 young women and three young men.

1. The students' motivation changes in the course of the first year: at first, their main reason for participating is interest in their future profession - many will later be working with families in precarious social situations. Later on, they say that the reason for continuing in the project is the friendly relationship to the child, the parents' satisfaction, and the experience of being of real help to the child.
2. The volunteers see the fact that the child receives support for its development as the most important benefit of the project. In second place their commitment to the project is seen as significant for their personal development, and in the last place they see a possible contribution to the development of society as a whole.
3. What the students learn in the course of their studies is seen as contributing very little to the success of their practical work. Almost all those questioned felt that their professors were indifferent towards their volunteer work.
4. Most of the students try to interest others for this volunteer work through informal contacts, but rarely find anyone who wants to take on this kind of responsibility.
5. All 18 students questioned said that they would be interested in more intensive contact and mutual activities with volunteers from the other nationalities.

How do we let these mostly **psycho-social results** lead us to a **process of empowerment** which will give young women (and men), university students, "increased access to resources and improve the balance of power between the sexes in the direction of increased justice and equality"?

Until now, we have not paid particular attention to gender equality in our "Older Sister, Older brother" project. Although more than half of the "little brothers and sisters" are boys who would certainly benefit from positive male role models, it has been practically impossible to interest male students from the Departments of Science, Economics or Technology in volunteer work.

- ⇒ Since more than 90% of project participants are women, we think it legitimate that the capacity-building and empowerment of young women as a major factor in creating a just and non-violent civil society receive a great deal of emphasis.
- ⇒ During their training for volunteer work in this project, the young women students develop gender-specific attitudes and methods for working with boys and girls.