24 June 2011

UNDP jointly supported UNV by donating desks, chairs, bookshelves and a fridge. Now the children are seated at their desks on the colourful donated chairs. As one child said, ‘finally we have our own school!’ (UNV, 2011)

Making a difference

Pristina, Kosovo: UNV supported The Ideas Partnership (TIP), a local NGO, with text books and stationery for their catch-up classes to Roma children who are preparing for a test to register into formal schooling.

I first heard about this NGO when donating winter clothes for the Roma community in Pristina. I made my personal contribution by giving away jumpers, coats and shoes with the hope it will at least keep a few family members warm in the long cold winter weather. Not long after I heard that my colleagues from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) were going to visit the NGO, which had just started offering catch-up classes to Roma children, and I seized the opportunity to see what it was all about.

It was a very cold day driving through the muddy melted snow as we approached the small alleyways to an apartment being used as the school and office. It was very cold inside the rooms, with very little insulation, and the children sat on the floor leaning against the wall repeating the words of their teacher attentively. We then entered another room full of...
children of all ages looking at us and greeting us with their smiles, handshakes and thanks in Albanian. At the end of their school day, all the children gathered to sing a song thanking us for our visit. This was the fifth day since the classes had started and already there were some 50 children attending.

The classes are run by three Albanian-speaking teachers in addition to a number of volunteers who give English lessons and provide one-on-one tutoring for those who need the extra help. Children sat on the floor without desks, books, notebooks or pencils. The teacher had only one text book.

Following the visit, UNV took action in responding to the immediate needs of the school by offering 100 sets of text books, working books, note books along with stationery including pens, pencils, erasers and a pencil sharpener. With this, each child will have the essentials to learn and be motivated to come to school every day.

UNDP jointly supported UNV by further donating the long awaited desks, chairs, bookshelves and a fridge. Within three weeks, the empty apartment was magically transformed. As one child said, ‘finally we have our own school!’ Now the children are seated at their desks on the colourful donated chairs and, with their new sets of books and stationery, they can finally get down to learning and doing their homework.

We held a small donation ceremony with the presence of the UNDP Resident Representative who said a few words and watched the faces of the children light up as they cheered when she presented the text books.

It all started with an idea and inspiration. It was possible to make a difference in three weeks. We are very proud to support this project and wish to acknowledge the commitment and dedication of the volunteers who have provided these children with an opportunity to learn and have hope for a better future.

Europe and the CIS

- Kosovo • The Ideas Partnership • UNDP • school

Sustainable Development Goal: