

## **Report on Evaluation Results for the 2023/2024 Program Cycle**

### **Processing of Input and Output Data – Questionnaire for Monitoring Children's Progress in the Older Brother, Older Sister Program**

During the 2023/2024 cycle, a total of 164 children were involved in the *Older Brother, Older Sister* program from the following partner organizations:

- Association for the Prevention of Addiction NARKO-NE, Sarajevo
- Association Earth of Children in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Tuzla
- Center for Psychological Support Sensus, Mostar
- Youth Education Center, Travnik
- Association New Generation, Banja Luka
- Association for the Assistance to Children and Youth with Special Needs Ray of Hope, Foča
- Association for the Care and General Rights of Children Our Children, Zenica
- Center for Children, Youth, and Family, Laktaši

The assessment of children's skills and their use of free time is conducted at two points: at the beginning and at the end of the cycle. The support provided by the Older Brother/Older Sister volunteers is an intervention whose effects are measured at the end of several months of interaction.

Out of the 164 children involved, complete evaluation standardized questionnaires were submitted by the coordinators for a *total of 84 children*. Results will be presented for 46 boys (54.8%) and 38 girls (45.2%). Incomplete questionnaires have been excluded from statistical analysis.

For children who were also involved in the previous 2022/23 program cycle, the results of their evaluations from July 2023 were used as their baseline data for the 2023/24 cycle. This applies to 21 children, while for all other participants, their self-reports from the October 2023 questionnaires were used as baseline data.

Among the 84 analyzed participants, 38 (45.24%) were newly included in the program at the start of the 2023/24 cycle. The reasons for their inclusion varied (23 of these participants live in institutional settings), 13 have developmental difficulties such as speech and language disorders, combined disorders, learning difficulties, and emotional issues. Additionally, they come from families with frequent conflicts where they are exposed to violence, and more than half of the included children live near the poverty line. Coordinators from partner organizations rate them as children with low self-esteem and ineffective coping skills.

Overall, the comparison of results between the two measurement points was conducted for the following number of children:

Organization	N. of analyzed children
Association for the Addiction Prevention NARKO-NE, Sarajevo	22 (26.19%)
Center for Psychological Support Sensus, Mostar	18 (21.43%)
Youth Education Center, Travnik	12 (14.29%)
Association for the Care and General Rights of Children, <i>Our Children</i> , Zenica	12 (14.29%)
Association Earth of Children in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Tuzla	10 (11.90)
Association New Generation, Banja Luka	6 (7.14%)
Center for Children, Youth, and Family, Laktaši	4 (4.76%)

The average age of the participants is 11 years. The average school grade within the sample is 3 (good academic achievement).

*In this program cycle, due to the smaller number of completed adapted questionnaires, the results for participants with developmental difficulties were not specifically analyzed, as the final questionnaires were submitted for 3 participants out of a total of 11 who had completed the adapted version of the questionnaire at the beginning of the cycle.*

All data were coded by the coordinators to protect the identity of the program participants. The questionnaire for monitoring the progress of children in the *Older Brother, Older Sister program* consists of 5 subtests that examine the following categories:

- The child's relationship with the volunteer (12 sub-questions/criteria that assess the quality of the relationship between the child and the volunteer)
- How the child spends their free time (14 sub-questions)
- Exposure to various educational and cultural events (14 sub-questions)
- Socially desirable behavior (9 sub-questions)
- The child's self-image (17 sub-questions, which were analyzed using the Self-Perception Scale, specially created for the needs of this program, and which includes 6 questions for assessing emotional literacy).

Below, we will present the results for each of the above tests at two measurement points: before the start of the interaction between the children and volunteers and at the end of the program cycle—after several months of work between the volunteers and children.

### ***Relationship with the Volunteer***

- 55 participants were matched with a volunteer of the same gender.
- 74 participants (88.1%) reported that they had interesting interactions with their volunteers.
- 77 participants (91.66%) were involved in choosing the locations they visited with their volunteers, which positively impacted their experience.
- 80 participants (95.24%) stated that they felt trust in their volunteers and felt protected, knowing their secrets were kept safe. The same percentage of children said that their volunteers kept every promise and that they could share their feelings and thoughts with them when they were sad.
- 81 participants (96.43%) reported that their volunteers praised them every time they did something good.
- 61 participants (72.62%) said that their volunteers helped them make new friends, and 43 participants (51.19%) received support from volunteers with their schoolwork.
- 75 participants (89.23%) felt free to disagree with their volunteer and to discuss various topics with them.
- 81 participants (96.43%) were generally very satisfied with their experience and expressed a desire to continue their interaction with their volunteers in the next program cycle.
- Free Time

### ***Free time***

Program participants were surveyed at two time points to examine how they spent their free time over the previous six months (before the start of the program and at the end of the program cycle).

Some of the most significant results are as follows:

- There was no significant change in watching TV for more than two hours a day or playing video games (18 participants had this habit at the start of the cycle, and 14 at the end), but the number of participants who spent time with friends in person increased.
- 80 participants (95.24%) stated that they walk and talk with friends almost every day or whenever possible. Additionally, 42 participants (50%) reported engaging in social games almost every day.
- Although there was no change in the frequency of sports activities (37 or 44% of participants engaged in sports equally often at the beginning and end of the cycle), the number of participants involved in extracurricular activities increased (27.3% at the end of the cycle compared to 26% at the beginning).
- Interaction with volunteers contributed to an increase in the amount of time children spent listening to/singing/playing music and engaging in creative work (48.8% at the end of the cycle compared to 36.7% who had these activities at the beginning).
- Interaction with volunteers contributed to an increase in the number of participants who helped adults in the household (80.5% at the end of the cycle compared to 56% at the beginning).

- Satisfaction with the activities available to participants during their free time increased from 53.6% to 70.7%, as did satisfaction with the ability to choose activities (from 41.7% at the start to 58.5% at the end).
- These data suggest that the program positively influenced the quality of free time and participants' satisfaction with the activities offered. Overall, interaction with volunteers contributed to increased engagement in various activities, improved satisfaction, and expanded interests among participants.

### ***Participation in Educational and Cultural Activities***

According to the analysis of the subtest on exposure of participants in the Older Brother, Older Sister program to historical and cultural landmarks, the results showed the following:

- Although the differences are not statistically significant, there was an increase in the number of children who often or very often visited museums/libraries/theaters—from 31% at the start of the cycle to 40.3% at the end.
- The frequency of attending sports events did not change compared to the start of the cycle (28% of participants attended such events often or very often throughout the program).
- The number of outings to eat out (in restaurants/cafes) increased through interaction with volunteers—from 63.10% at the start to 82.9% at the end, with children reporting frequent participation in this type of activity with volunteers.
- The number of visits to bookstores increased from 53.3% at the start of the cycle to 68.3% at the end, with children reporting frequent participation in this activity with volunteers.
- The number of children who had the experience of going on trips during their free time increased from 47.6% at the start of the cycle to 59.8% at the end, with children reporting opportunities to go on trips with volunteers.
- The number of children who experienced visits to seasonal fairs and events increased from 21.4% at the start of the cycle to 29.3% at the end, with children reporting frequent participation in this activity with volunteers.
- There was no difference in the number of participants who had experience managing pocket money and paying in public places—44% at both the start and end of the cycle (*given the average age of 11 years, this is an acceptable result*).
- The number of visits to religious landmarks through interaction with volunteers decreased from 39.3% at the start of the cycle to 28.1% at the end.
- There was no difference in the number of children who have the habit of preparing their own healthy meals—37.8% of children reported having this habit at the end of the program cycle (*considering the average age of 11 years, this is an acceptable result*).
- The number of children who frequently and very frequently talk to adults about what they see on the internet increased from 44.2% to 50% at the end of the program cycle.
- The number of children who seek advice or help from an older adult because of something bad that happened to them increased from 45.2% to 53.6% at the end of the program cycle.
- The number of children with experience participating in group activities such as workshops and quizzes increased from 48.8% to 58.5% at the end of the program cycle.

- The number of children with frequent participation in ecological actions increased from 26.2% at the start of the cycle to 39% at the end of the program cycle.

### ***Socially Desirable Behaviors***

When it comes to socially and personally beneficial behaviors, the results show that participants exhibited the following behaviors more frequently after the program:

- There was a slight increase in the number of children who use the internet for school purposes—from 38.1% at the start of the program cycle to 42.7% at the end.
- The number of children who used some form of public transportation increased to 50%, compared to 39.3% at the start of the cycle.
- The number of children who take care of their own cleanliness and neatness increased to 93.8%, compared to 83.4% at the start of the cycle.
- The number of children who reported treating others with courtesy and respect increased to 96.3%, compared to 85.8% at the start of the cycle.
- The number of children who reported keeping deadlines and agreements with older adults and friends increased to 87.8%, compared to 82.2% at the start of the cycle.
- The number of children who make and follow weekly schedules increased to 47.5%, compared to 39.3% who had this habit at the start of the cycle.
- 47.5% of children showed increased awareness of the importance of environmental protection and more often used reusable bags compared to plastic bags, compared to 27.4% who had this habit at the start of the program cycle. Additionally, the number of children who properly disposed of waste increased to 91.4%, compared to 84.5% at the start of the program cycle.
- 89% of children reported helping someone when it was needed, compared to 78.3% with similar experiences at the start of the program cycle.

### ***Self-Image and Emotional Literacy***

To test for statistically significant differences between the results on the *Self-Image Scale* before and after the program cycle, a T-test for dependent samples was conducted.

Results show that there is no statistically significant difference on the *Self-Image scale* between the two measurement points at the start ( $M = 17.28$ ) and the end of the program cycle ( $M = 17.70$ ); Sig. 0.518;  $> 0.05$ .

There is also no statistically significant difference on the *Emotional Literacy subscale* at the start of the cycle ( $M = 14.32$ ) and at the end of the cycle ( $M = 14.52$ ).

However, self-reports from an average of 68 or 80.95% of the surveyed children show that they gave positive answers about themselves and their emotional patterns on all questions from these subtests, while 16 (19.05%) participants were not satisfied with their self-image.

## Conclusion

The main results of the 2023/2024 program cycle are as follows:

- **Relationship with Volunteers:**

- Based on participant feedback, the Older Brother, Older Sister program shows extremely positive results. Most participants felt significant support and trust in their volunteers. A high percentage of participants were involved in planning activities and locations, which further enriched their experience. Additionally, most participants were praised for their achievements, many made new friends, and received help with schoolwork. Most importantly, participants felt free to express themselves and had a desire to continue their interaction with volunteers. These results attest to the program's success and the dedication of volunteers in providing support and positive experiences for all children.

- **Free Time:**

- The analysis shows that the Older Brother, Older Sister program positively contributed to participants' behavior and satisfaction. Although there was no significant change in watching TV or playing video games, there was an increase in the number of participants who spent more time with friends in person. Most participants regularly walk and talk with friends, and a significant number are involved in social games. Despite stability in the intensity of sports activities, there was an increase in participation in extracurricular activities, as well as engagement in music and creative work. Satisfaction with free time and the ability to choose activities also increased, suggesting that interaction with volunteers helped participants discover new interests and activities, making their free time more meaningful.

- **Educational and Cultural Activities:**

- The analysis shows that the Older Brother, Older Sister program significantly contributed to participants' behavior and satisfaction in this aspect. Although there was no significant change in exposure to historical and cultural landmarks, there was an increase in visits to museums, libraries, theaters, and bookstores. The increase in group activities, trips, and outings during free time, along with discussions with older adults about the internet and other topics, indicates that participants felt comfortable sharing experiences and advice with others. Overall, these results show that the program encouraged children to engage in different cultural, social and environmentally friendly activities - with the aim to improve their communication skills and independence.

- **Socially Desirable Behaviors:**

- The program also positively influenced the development of socially and personally beneficial behaviors among participants. There was a slight increase in the number of children who used the internet for school purposes, while the number of participants who used public transportation and took care of their cleanliness and neatness also increased. Most participants reported treating others with courtesy and respect, keeping deadlines, and participating in environmental protection activities. Additionally, most participants reported helping others when needed, indicating that

the program successfully encouraged empathy, responsibility, and good habits among participants.

- ***Self-Image and Emotional Literacy:***

- Based on the analysis of the *Self-Image Scale* results before and after the program cycle, there is no significant change in children's self-perception. The measurements at the beginning (mean = 17.28) and the end of the cycle (mean = 17.70) did not show a statistically significant difference, indicating that the children's self-image, on average, has not changed. Similarly, no significant change was observed in *Emotional literacy*, as the mean values at the beginning (14.32) and the end of the cycle (14.52) were similar. However, it is important to note that 68 or 80.95% of the children surveyed gave positive responses to questions about themselves and their emotional patterns, indicating a generally positive self-image. On the other hand, about 19% of the children were not satisfied with their self-image. These findings suggest that, while there are no significant statistical changes, most children still have a positive view of themselves, while a smaller number express dissatisfaction. This area of development could represent one of the goals for the next program cycle and a focus for volunteers in their interactions with program participants.