ACCESS TO EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME OPPORTUNITIES • APPROACHES AND METHODS AMONG ROMA AND OTHER DISADVANTAGED GROUPS

MARCH 2006
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Analysis and Insights

- Group lending mechanisms employing moral guarantees among its members serve as an alternative for individuals without access to traditional credit programs, which require a stable job (work contract) or initial capital. Beneficiaries must have an initial degree of experience in order to access such programs, though results so far are rather impressive, in terms of repayment rates and the ability of individuals to develop small-scale entrepreneurial activities. The group lending mechanism serves both to pre-select promising initiatives and individuals, and to provide a method to contribute to developing trust and mutual support among its members, a key value promoted by PAKIV.
- The report includes a total of twelve programs and projects from Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania, Slovenia, and Serbia and Montenegro which serve to highlight various approaches and methods to increasing access to income and employment. The examples are divided into three main approaches, namely 1) Increasing access to labor markets, with programs involving vocational training and job mediation, temporary employment, methods to achieve long-term unemployed and laid-off and informal and seasonal work opportunities. 2) Enterprise Development, with examples of a business resource center, micro-credits for small enterprise development, and setting up a brick-making workshop. 3) Community-based income-generating activities for Roman individuals and groups, involving goat-breeding with revolving community donations, a combination of loans and grants to support small-scale agricultural initiatives, and sheep breeding for establishing a community bank. Each section is concluded with some main insights and analytical points. Five of the local programs involve facilitation or participation of PAKIV network members in local operations, while others have been added to provide for a more inclusive outlook to various approaches and methods. The concluding section of the report undermines some key aspects of policy relevance.
among less experienced groups, but it seems that it is mostly about alleviating hunger, improving self-help strategies and ensuring some additional income. It is difficult for many groups to work their way up to formal business development without additional investments, and all groups are confronted with the challenge of finding secure markets for selling products.

It is important to underline the social and psychological impact such programs can have on excluded communities. In such cases, support of local initiatives may serve to break apathy, build social responsibility and trust within communities, along with a greater sense of self-worth among participating individuals.

While there is no single ‘recipe for success’, in the sense of ensuring fulfillment of original objectives by local initiatives, some methods in working with local groups seem to be common among different programs. In the experience of PAKIV, amongst others, pre-project facilitation with local groups to build trust, confidence and management capacity prepares the community for the start-up of more complex income and employment initiatives. Technical assistance to increase knowledge on the proposed activity is also important, while active, respected and skilled local leadership also helps ensure that the project is embedded in the community and well managed.

Policy Relevance and Concluding Remarks

The way in which communities are approached is an important aspect, for which organizations and programs often differ. Among civic organizations, there are open calls for proposals, at times with only a limited number of applications, so staff invest time to meet and discuss with local groups on site. Others may have a more pro-active approach, entering communities to offer new opportunities, due to geographical targeting, personal or professional relationships. In the contest of government programs, the predominant method is to employ open, competitive tendering processes, including co-financing in some schemes. Open tendering processes for larger-scale programs makes it difficult for marginalized community groups without prior experience or resources to start up new activities.

In such situations, it is worth considering the introduction of ‘incubator programs’ to allow for less experienced groups to gain experience managing initiatives, administrative procedures, and the start-up of small scale initiatives, which can later be expanded in the contest of more complex programs. In addition, governments may consider exceptions to funding facilities or networks, which can assist locals in preparatory phases of developing ideas and proposals, and perhaps employ a more proactive approach to facilitate such initiatives in areas where little is happening.

It is relatively common knowledge that anti-Roma prejudice and discrimination are common place and serve as a barrier to employment opportunities. Interactions between Roma and non-Roma do not exist in an environment free of discrimination, prejudice, and lack of contact and trust, which is why it is so important that efforts to improve the situation of Roma are carried out in a comprehensive manner.

BACKGROUND

While national governments continue to develop strategies and programs aimed at combating poverty and increasing income and employment opportunities of Roma, it must be recognized that there has been no substantial breakthrough in countering the massive unemployment and exclusion of Roma from formal labor markets. For example, in 2003, more than half of the Roma citizens, who lost their jobs and ‘employability’ during the economic transformations, the disadvantages created by poverty and exclusion means that subsequent generations are at serious risk of remaining marginalized.

In the context of the Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti in the OSCE Area, the action on addressing socio-economic issues points to the need to carry out specific measures aimed at combating isolation and poverty and ensuring the equal fulfillment of the social and economic rights of Roma and Sinti. In particular, the facilitation of grass-roots level activities, based on the specific needs of local groups, is emphasized as a key aspect to promoting the development of additional income opportunities. The Pact European Roma Fund (PAF) is an international, non-governmental organization promoting the development of Roma’s civil society and intercultural understanding in Europe, in the framework of democratic, social and economic rights.

APPROACHES AND METHODS FOR PROMOTING EQUAL ACCESS TO EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME AMONG ROMA AND OTHER DISADVANTAGED GROUPS

CASE EXAMPLES

EUROPEAN PROGRAM - IMPROVING THE LABOR MARKET SITUATION OF ROMA IN HERNAI VALLEY, HUNGARY (AUTONOMIA FOUNDATION AND THE DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATION OF HERNAI VALLEY)

Implementing organizations

The main project leader was the Autonomia Foundation, which has a strong history of providing grants and loans to income-generating initiatives among rural Romani organizations in Hungary. In order to implement the EQUAL program, a number of organizations which worked with Autonomia in the past set up the Development Association of Hernai Valley in 2002. The total cost of the program was about 410,000 Euro.

Among the objectives of the Structural Funds, the EQUAL Community Initiative Programme supports initiatives which foster the training of job access and employment of disadvantaged people who are excluded from the labor market or experience difficulties in accessing employment due to discrimination related to gender, ethnic origin, disability or age, low schooling, lack of qualifications, lack of job experience, etc.

In order to apply for support, organizations should form partnerships with other public and private stakeholders (associations, trade unions, public bodies, foundations, public benefit organizations, central government organizations, local authorities and organizations, local minority government, local authority partnerships, other public bodies).

For both EQUAL programs and other programs launched in the framework of the Human Resource Development Operational Plan, it is important to note that the projects are selected on a competitive basis in the context of an open tendering procedure, in which the main objectives, target groups and, at times, range of activities are defined by the particular program.

Hernád Valley is located in Borsod-Abauj-Zemplén County, a northeastern region of Hungary, and, in economic terms, one of the most underdeveloped regions of the country. The proportion of the population engaged in agriculture (1,954), nearly 20-25% of Hungary’s Roma population lives in this region. The closer target region of the project, Erics, has a typical landscape of forests and fields, crossed by a number of small streams. As of the region’s 5th settle-ments have a population of fewer than 500. The micro-region has a mixed economy; it is characterized by arable land, though the majority of the population used to work in the industrial sector before the economic changes. A substantial part of agricultural
In planning the vocational training courses, the project took local needs and opportunities, as well as the expected short and long term economic development plans, into consideration. These include the building of cold-storage houses and the planned construction of the M3 highway towards Slovakia, which will provide jobs for light and heavy machine operators, and human resource needs of forestry enterprises operating in the area. Women were the primary consumers of the vocational training courses for florists and shop assistants. Due to the timing of the program and concurrent organization of second chance education and vocational training, only 5 persons accessing the second chance educational program could participate in vocational training courses.

The vocational training courses were completed with few dropouts owing to the fact that both the timing and the venues of the courses were set with maximum flexibility. The courses were always held in one of the small settlements, which meant that, in most cases, the trainees could reach the locations without extensive travel. In some cases, however, the radial arrangement of local transport allowed the local employers to join the part of the Romanian organizations, which in the end drove some participants to the venues personally. The training institutions also scheduled the courses according to the needs of the trainees, while avoiding the timing of their peak season. As a result, they had to organize lengthy courses since the duration of the program was a significant motivational factor for participants. The ideal course is a maximum of 6-8 months. In terms of timing, seasonal opportunities were also factored in, organizing the courses in winter and early spring months, so they would not coincide with the time of agricultural works.

The vocational training courses were carried out by the Andrássy Gyula Technical-High School of Miskolc as well as the Educational Center of the Industrial Association of Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén County. The accredited curricula of the courses were provided by the training institutions, which also took care of the preliminary medical and aptitude tests of the participants as well as the final exams. The practical scenes of the training courses were made available by the local governments and the members of the Development Association.

The following vocational training courses were provided in the framework of the program:

- Heavy machine operator – twenty men
- Lumbaring profession – nineteen men
- Florist profession – fourteen women
- Motor-saw operator – fifteen men
- Lights and installation in the workshop – twenty men
- Shop assistant – thirteen women and three men

Total: 104 (77 men and 27 women)

Roma Labor Market Roundtable

In order to involve the actors of primary labor market, the project also established the Roma Labor Market Roundtable – a forum where local enterprises, employers and trainees just completing the courses could meet. The meetings were quite popular, attended by some 50-60 participants, where potential jobs and financing opportunities were discussed.

Purchase of equipment

The Development Association bought the following equipment to assist local Romanian organizations in expanding their work:

- Ten computers with printers used by the referees and transferred to the Lungo Drom Member Organization of Méta at the end of the program.
- One second-hand UKI (forestry machine) for the Phralipe Member Organization of Kórkó.
- Seven motor-saws for the Phralipe Member Organization of Vászúdpuszta.

Additional capacity building

The program also provided possibilities for local organizational development. A training course on project management was organized for local members to learn the basics of project planning, management and how to use their internal resources. An enterprise development course was organized for local organizations engaged in community farming and business activities, along with other interested persons. Both the Romanian organizations and the labor market referees monitored upcoming financing and allowed the them to provide feedback and insights on the elaboration of new proposals. As a result, three of the participating Romanian organizations launched new programs responding to other needs within the communities during the course of the project.

Results

At the planning stage of the project, the employment program element was built on three pillars: partners of the Development Association operating as business organizations; other external organizations of the primary labor market, and Romanian organizations running community-based economic programs.

From the start, the business organizations involved in the Development Association only provided a part of the jobs they had planned due to overestimations in their own development and growth. The main employers in the program are those Romanian organizations and local businesses, which are members of the Development Association. Most of these organizations were in the primary labor market, and only provide a part of the jobs. As the number of vacancies is negligible in the micro-region, most of the local Roma are included in the general labor market program, support or opportunity is accessible.

Structural Funds – Active Labor Market Policy: Activation Program for Job Seekers in Slovakia (Municipality of Spišská Nová Ves, Baró Drom NGO, Labor and Social Affairs Office)

As in Hungary, the Human Resource Development – Operational Programme in Slovakia has several programs aimed at furthering a set of common objectives within National Development Plans to implement Structural Funds. In terms of Roma and other cooperative organizations, it was necessary to provide jobs in the cooperatives. The rate of unemployment in the micro-region of Encs is 33.8%, and, according to the data provided by the employment centre, 80% of the registered unemployed people are permanently unemployed. The population of the micro-region is one of the most undereducated: the local population completed an average of 7.8 school years, which is below the basic level of education. 10.3% of the registered unemployed have not completed 8 elementary classes, and 35.9% have elementary school only. According to estimates, there are some 20,000 people, who are completely excluded from the labor market; they have absolutely no contact with employment organizations and are not registered anywhere.

For most of the local Roma the only means of living are social benefits and allowances, as well as temporary or informal work in the grey economy. As the number of vacancies is negligible in the micro-region, there are a total of about 1000 registered business organizations, which are completely excluded from the labor market. The local labor market is only available for those who have completed at least the elementary school. The others belong to the aforementioned group of 20,000, for whom no labor market program, support or opportunity is accessible.

Goal of the project

The primary goal of the project was to help the Romanian population of the micro-region of Encs reintegrate into the labor market, create and develop the conditions necessary for permanent employment, as well as to prevent and eliminate ethnic discrimination.

Main scope of activities

1. Organizing and implementing training and vocational courses, including possibilities for gaining work experience based on local educational and employment needs.
2. Organizational development among Romanian community organizations, including their potential to enforce their economic interests,
3. Strengthening the labor market role of Romanian organizations by setting up a framework for the flow of information among local labor market actors, including the establishment and operation of a Romanian labor market consulting network and Roma Employment Roundtable.

Methods employed

Assessment of needs and opportunities

The preparation of the program started with a local needs survey carried out by the local Romanian partner organizations. By completing a questionnaire among the local population, the project team obtained a structured and thematic view of the local labor market, the most important community needs, the opportunities offered by the main employers, and the training and employment programs already available in the region. The organizations then planned their own project activities on the basis of the collected information and with the professional assistance and onsite visits provided by the Autonomia staff. As a result of the above, the surveys were already completed in the planning stage of the program, and the grant application summarized these needs and opportunities.
Background on the region

Sptíškův Nový Vět is located in the East Slovakian region of Spiš. The total population of the city is 36,940, out of which 19.10% are of Romani origin. The region is disadvantaged in terms of economic development and social difficulties, through the national park, Slovenský Raj (Slovakian heaven), may serve as a potential resource for further development of tourism.

In Sptíškův Nový Vět, Roma are mainly situated in two different communities. The larger settlement, ‘Viktura’, is more or less a small ghetto located about four kilometers from the town center. There are approximately 727 inhabitants living in a large housing unit (510) and separate houses (217). All community members are Christian. Housing is provided for by wood or coal burning, which is also used for cooking and heating water. The housing unit has electricity, with partial sewage and water hook up, and garbage is removed once a week. The land of the housing unit and all houses belong to the Sptíškův Nový Vět local government. There is one kindergarten in the settlement, where some 3 children attend, while others attend schools in another settlement located 2-3 kilometers away, or in the ‘special school’ for mentally disabled, which is about 8 kilometers from the community. There is a bus stop near the community and all services and authorities are about four kilometers away, in the center of town.

The unemployment rate in the community is about 95%, with no stable form of income and no one from the community has completed secondary education. However, among integrated Roma from the town, there are four strong businessmen, providing jobs to both Roma and non-Roma from Sptíškův Nový Vět. The municipality has hired four Roma from the community to serve as police officers, led by the local Václav, and one Roma social worker from the town to mediate communication and assistance in various areas.

A local NGO was created in the community in the context of a UNDP program, called Your Spisˇ. The NGO constructed a sports playground in the community for youth, and currently cooperates with the municipality in Structural Fund employment programs and a new Social Inclusion Partnership created by the Social Development Fund. The main aim of the organization is to assist and coordinate the daily tasks are to keep and promote the Romani traditions, while serving the development of active labor market policies.

Methodology

The Activation Program for Job Seekers is carried out by a partnership formed of Sptíškův Nový Vět municipality, the labor and social affairs office and a local Romani NGO – Baro Drom. It is part of a national program targeting all long-term unemployed, thus not particular to this town.

Methods employed

Local partnership among municipality, labor bureau and local Romani NGO

In the program, the local municipality, NGO Baro Drom and labor bureau signed a year-long agreement (April 2005 – April 2006) to carry out the activation program targeting 75 local Roma. The program is managed by a team of the NGO, formed of local Roma from the community and town. The program involves monthly payment by the labor bureau of about 20 euro, and the activation program bears all costs for protective materials (gloves, jackets) and building materials (lime, sand, paint, brushes) are paid.

Household survey for selecting participants

Selection of the participants was carried out by the management team and the Romani social worker for the municipality. To identify eligible persons, the team made door-to-door visits to discuss with families and observe living conditions. Participants had to be long-term unemployed, in difficult social conditions, and with initiative to partake in the program.

Installing work habits for job seekers with low motivation

The activation program targets job seekers with low incentives to work and who are in material need. The participants do not carry out public works, per se, but rather minor services for the municipality, considered voluntary work for public benefit. For the sake of the resident Roma, who are-Roma, the activation project is divided into two different stages: the work of the Romani organizations and representatives in the county, and to represent them at county and national levels. Other important tasks are to keep and promote the Romani traditions, while serving the further development of the society. Currently the DCKSzs has 43 partner organizations and more than a thousand members.

Background on the region

Barcs is situated in the south-west part in the country, next to the Hungarian –Croatian border. The total population is 12,600, of which 1,765 (13-15%) are of Romani origin, 10-11% German and about 3% other minorities. Barcs is a young town with more than a quarter of the population belonging to the 0-18 age group. The town is surrounded by the river Délka, while the geological conditions provide for both agricultural output and building materials industry. In 2001, the rate of unemployment among Roma was 21.9%, but with the recent closure of a major parquet factory, it is about 30%.

The project covers ten disadvantaged settlements of the Barcs micro-region, and involves 35-35 Roma and 15-20 non-Roma long-term unemployed. The settlements studied by the Health, Social and Family Affairs, the Economic and the Agricultural Ministries are disadvantaged, particularly with respect to employment, security and economic activity.

Goal of the project

To improve qualifications and employment opportunities among young, long-term unemployed Roma and non-Roma with multiple disadvantages.

Main scope of activities

The 22-month program (November 2004 – August 2006) includes:
1. Identification of fifty long-term unemployed Roma and non-Roma from the micro-region of Barcs to participate in an 18-month program (2005-06).
2. Employment, mentoring and work mediation techniques.
3. Make a positive impact on the surrounding environment and strengthen personal identity by stimulating learning, responsibility, and changes in attitudes and values among participants.
The long-term, stable employment perspectives among beneficiaries are not foreseen, though the project seeks to provide at least 15 persons with an additional two months employment.

Programs to increase access to employment among disadvantaged groups in Lom, Bulgaria (Roma-Lom Foundation)

The Roma-Lom Foundation (RLF) is a non-governmental, private foundation established in 1995 in the town of Lom, Northwestern Bulgaria. Since its inception, the foundation has steadily developed programs serving the citizens of Lom, a town which is host to four Romanian settlements representing about 50% of the total population. Beneficiaries of the foundation’s programs are both Roma and non-Roma. The main program areas include education, access to employment and income-generation and social services. In recent years, the foundation has also expanded its focus to facilitate greater effectiveness of civil society in the northwest regions of Bulgaria (Montana, Vidin and Vratsa).

Background of the region

The town of Lom is located in the Northwest region of Bulgaria. The general recession and structural problems in the region are particularly serious impediments to the implementation of programs for development. Over the last years, the region has confronted an acute demographic crisis. For example, in Lom there were 35,800 citizens in 1997, while the latest census of March 2001 showed that the population has decreased to 27,800. As a result of the decreasing population, the ethnic composition of the town has also changed: In 2001, the Roma represented more than 50% compared to 35% in 1992.

The town of Lom has also brought the local and regional economy to ‘collapse’ and foreign investments vary between 1-6%. Official statistics indicate that the unemployment level in Lom is 34%, one of the highest in the country. According to surveys done by local NGOs, which take into account hidden unemployment, the figure increases to 67%. Almost one-third of the local population is registered with the Social Care Office. The unemployment rate among Roma reaches 90-95% of the active population; Lom is 34%, one of the highest in the country. According to surveys done by local NGOs, which take into account hidden unemployment, the figure increases to 67%. Quite often the access to social care services is restricted owing to a number of reasons, such as low civic understanding about rights and existing regulations and the fact that, every year the deficit in the municipal budget and delays in paying the town without resources for social benefits. Such situations periodically intensify social tensions, leading to acute conflicts and open civil disobedience.

Goal

1. Increase access to income and alternative forms of employment for marginalized groups

Main scope of activities

1. Stimulate vocational training, on-the-job work experience and job placement for long-term unemployed.
2. Mediate greater access to the market for seasonal, hourly and home jobs.
3. Mediate Roma’s participation in governmental employment programs.

Methods

Vocational training and on-the-job experience

At the beginning of each year RLF meets with the Labor Bureau Directorate to receive updated information on the employment rate, level of professional skills among registered unemployed and availability of the market. The two institutions always work on a plan coordinating their interaction in the implementation of national employment programs and those of the foundation.

Disseminating information within Romani communities

To improve information within the Roma community, RLF held periodic meetings in the four Roma neighborhoods to explain the government programs, in particular the ‘Education, Qualification and Employment’ program and others for temporary jobs. The programs are implemented jointly by the Labor Bureau, the Social Assistance Directorate and the Employment Club. A total of 217 people participated in the meetings. In addition to onsite meetings, RLF published a brochure in 400 copies, which was disseminated in the Romani neighbourhoods and public places throughout the town.

Bringing employers and job-seekers together

RLF organized a meeting with 32 local employers to inform them of the current status of local unemployed (professional qualifications, age, duration of unemployment, and discuss the employment requirements for eventual new employees (qualification, experience, skills, discipline, educational qualification, preferred age, etc.). With restaurant businesses representing the most opportune labor market possibilities, RLF organized a meeting with 27 unemployed persons up to 30 years old to inform them of employers’ expectations in the case they are hired.

Contractual Agreements to divide roles and responsibilities

Through a contractual agreement between RLF and the Labor Bureau, a vocational training in bartending and waiting was organized for unemployed up to the age of thirty. RLF recommended the participants, motivated them to participate and provided materials and facilities when needed. The Labor Bureau provided specialists and instructors, and paid 40% of the minimum wage to the participants of the course. An agreement was also signed with one of the corners that rely on on-the-job experience within their restaurants. A total of 20 persons were included in the group, and at the end of 2004, eight of them were employed.

Facilitating work experience and employment among youth

RLF also targets youth in terms of increasing access to work experience and employment by mediating contracts between local employers and unemployed youth. In ensuring participation of representatives from the local business community, the foundation assists a series of meetings, in which there were a total of 41 participants. RLF also contacted the labor bureau to get the updated information on unemployed persons up to the age of thirty. Next, interested employers met with twenty permanently unemployed youth to discuss the program’s opportunities and details.

From June to December, twenty persons in the youth employment program were employed. The job breakdown includes two cooks, three waitresses and three dishwashers, among participating women, and twelve barmen and waiters. After the six-month project period ended, twelve of the participants (60%) were permanently employed. The program had a positive image on the foundation’s work and, as a result, the government for a project for RLF to develop a similar program – ‘From Social Care to Employment’, which is funded by the European Union and the Bulgarian Government, with the aim of decreasing the number of permanent unemployed and restoring work habits.

Mediating access to seasonal, temporary, hourly and home jobs

At the beginning of the 2004, RLF updated its database on seasonal and home jobs offered by companies and natural persons by organizing a series of meetings to discuss with local employers the possibility of providing seasonal and home jobs. In all, another twelve persons in obtaining work as cleaners in front of private restaurants, coffee shops and public places. In all, partnerships between RLF and four private companies provided work to eighty people, all of them with Roma origin.

In 2004, RLF also met with representatives of the contractor implementing the “Urbanization and Social Development of Regions with Significant Minority Populations” project due to start in 2005. The objective of the project is to improve the infrastructure of one Roma neighborhood in Lom. As a result of the meeting, an agreement was reached, in which RLF would recommend 115 people to work in the project for a period of 21 months.

Mediating access to government programs for alternative employment

Raise awareness within Romani communities

To raise awareness about the opportunities provided in various government programs RLF and Labor Bureau representatives held a series of information sessions in the four Roma neighborhoods, and the foundation developed and distributed an information leaflet on the rights and responsibilities of unemployed persons in meeting the conditions to participate in the programs.

Set up a joint committee to monitor implementation and provide for transparency

In monitoring program implementation and providing transparency in the selection of eligible participants, representatives of RLF and the local labor bureau formed a joint committee. The committee participated in the selection 138 people for participation in the government employment programs.

Results

To improve the implementation of employment programs, the foundation developed a joint action plan together with the Labor Bureau and the State Employment Office. Through onsite visits and production of leaflets, over 600 locals were informed of various employment programs of the foundation and the labor bureau. Some forty local employers were updated on the situation of local unemployed, and labor market competitiveness was increased for 44 long-term unemployed, all of whom received guaranteed work for six months or on-the-job experience. Out of the 44, 20 received permanent jobs.

Through mediation activities among businesses and local unemployed persons, temporary work was provided for eighty persons and 138 participated in various governmental programs.

Broadening Horizons for Roma Youth and Young Adults In Belgrade, Serbia and Montenegro (Care SaM, DUR-Roma NGO and Bozidar Adzija University Education)

Implementing organizations

The project was carried out in 2003 by CARE Serbia and Macedonia,
In continuing its credit program, the foundation set up a temporary working group of representatives from the municipal hall, Labor Bureau, Social Assistance Bureau and RLF to develop criteria and select participants of the program. Establishing a database on local businesses and preparing them for EU Accession is related to the disadvantaged regions with significant Romani populations. In such cases, even simple vocational training is linked to paid work experience, job mediation and place-work, which contributed to maintaining good attendance among participants, as everyone completed the program.

### RESULTS

Out of the 50 young Roma who partook in the project, around 70% found a job.

### ANALYSIS AND INSIGHTS

Active labor market policies and public works programs to increase access to labor markets seem to be the predominant approach used to address unemployment, especially in the context of Structural Fund programs. Active labor market policies, including public works schemes, can provide welcome income to benefitaries, but they do not provide for real perspectives. In some cases, it serves to re-enter long-term unemployed persons into the system, though the short-term nature of the work means that it is not a stable job.

### ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT

#### CASE EXAMPLES

**Business Resource Center and Credit Program in Lom, Bulgaria (RLF – Roma – Lom Foundation)**

See background in above section.

#### Goal

To establish conditions for SME development in Lom.

#### Main activities

1. Local economic strategy development.
2. Provision of services to active businesspeople.
3. Operating a small credit program.
4. Total cost for start-up 10,000 euro.

#### Methods

Forming and developing competencies within a local working group for economic development in Lom.

In the context of its program activities in the past RLF facilitated the establishment of an economic working group formed of representatives from local institutions and businesses. In 2004, the working group reviewed the municipal strategy for economic development and proposed improvements in relation to placing greater accent on development of small family businesses. In analyzing its own work during the first half of the year, members of the working group decided to improve their own skills by attending training courses on lobbying and advocacy, and public campaigns. In discussing problems related to strategy development, the working group focused on administrative barriers to starting new businesses, and thus drafted a proposal for enhancing the operational efficiency of municipal offices controlling the process, which was introduced for review and discussion in the municipal council in 2005.

Establishing a database on local businesses and preparing them for EU Accession.

As a starting point for providing services to local businesses in Lom, RLF maintains a database on the current situation of local businesses and organized a series of joint meetings among local business people and the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy. The meetings are to communicate expected changes in the business environment when Bulgaria will join the European Union. In all, 42 representatives of the business sector participated.

Increasing awareness of services and credit programs.

In 2004, RLF published two brochures (400 copies) to inform local citizens about the business-related services provided by the foundation, along with other information leaflets on existing credit programs of the government and banks, in view of facilitating greater access and awareness of existing possibilities. The project also involved constant monitoring and group-work or peer-pressure, which contributed to maintaining good attendance among participants, as everyone completed the program.
Publicizing the program and providing needs based training
To publicize the program, four meetings were held in the Romani neighborhoods, where some 152 participated in total. The foundation identified twelve people willing and able to start their own businesses. Upon assessing the needs of the group, the twelve candidates were working on business plan development and later small company management. In developing their business plans, the candidates received expert advice from personnel of Bulbank-AD, RLF’s partner in administering the credit program.

Selection and provision of credit
RLF staff and experts from the bank reviewed and evaluated the business proposals, and a decision was taken to extend credit to five of the twelve candidates. Types of activities include construction, blacksmith’s services, a hairdresser and a minimarket, with a maximum of about 1500 euro.

In this cycle the participants in the program were absolutely correct and punctual in the repayment of the loans. As follow-up, three of the participants in the program have received proposals by the bank to receive new loans under milder conditions. This in itself will help the establishment of stable relationships between the companies and the bank and will increase the trust of the bank to work with Romani businessmen. The credit program received good coverage in the local press and television.

Main scope of activities
1. Improve qualifications among Roma in Dej locality.
2. Setting up a workshop to produce bricks.
3. Create a non-profit, income-generating organization belonging to the Roma, to manage the production of cement for bricks and bricklaying, with can be sold in the region.
4. Profit obtained will be redirected toward the Roma population in Dej, for health and educational activities of the children.

Methods
Local needs and resource assessment
In preparing the project concept, the organizers carried out a local market research, which revealed that there is a demand for BCU and cement production, both locally and regionally. Likewise, in evaluating the Roma work force in Dej, it was found that many Roma worked in construction and developed appropriate abilities, even when they didn’t have the necessary schooling.

Promoting participation of local Roma community members in the project
To stimulate the participation of Roma in the project, the initiative group and local government selected 30 persons to assist in setting up the brick-making workshop, out of which a part of them received minimum wage payment for two months.

Selection of participants in the qualification course
The Roma community was informed about the possibility to participate in the vocational course and encouraged to apply. The selection criteria for participating was a) to come from a poor Roma family in Dej, b) have the ability to work in construction, and c) wish to complete the qualification course and obtain a job. A total of 20 persons were selected.

Goal of the program
CDF seeks to improve livelihoods by facilitating access to micro-credit. In addition, the program seeks to:

- provide focused information and support services;
- strengthen the culture for entrepreneurship;
- increase the success rate of businesses and the pace of business development;
- stimulate legal registration of businesses.

Background of the community
Dej municipality is located in Northwest Romania. The total population of the city is about 38,437, where, according to the official census, Roma number around 258.

The Roma community in Dej has a low level of professional qualification. 31% have completed primary school, 48.5% have completed the 8th grade, 13.5% have vocational training, and 7.5% have high school. In terms of household goods and land ownership (cars, anable land, furniture, agricultural machines), only 1% of the Roma population has such assets.

The project has now been completed and currently they are looking to stimulate local Romani communities involves a financial mechanism to start up, business planning, basic marketing, practical analysis of financial statements; basic management issues.

Micro-credit pilot program for Roma in Romania (Economic Development Center)
Implementing organizations
The Economic Development Center (CDF) is part of the Soros Open Network in Romania and has about six years of experience in providing assistance to local communities through micro-credits and business development services. Currently CDF has eleven offices throughout the country, providing micro-credits in 27 counties. Among communities assisted, CDF identified villages with significant Roma minorities, which represent the target group of the Roma Microfinance Program.

8.5% work on farms owned by others, 4) 12% various seasonal work in other enterprises.

As part of the project, 1000 promotional materials and offers were produced and distributed by the local government and Ramses.

Results
Over a period of 8 months, Ramses worked with the initiative group in view of forming the initiative group into a nonprofit organization, with income-generating activities. Once created, all assets of the project would be transferred from the local municipality ownership, to the organization.

Joint effort to obtain clients

While following the features of the present rural micro-credits scheme developed by CDF, the piloted schemes within Romanian communities are adjusted to specifics of these communities, such as: strong cultural and ethnic background, social hierarchy within communities, and the sizeable ratio of youth.

Credit Methodology for group-based lending
Credit methodology is based on village groups and solidarity of group members, with micro-credits extended to individuals based on their business needs and capacity to repay. The lending mechanism is based on accountability between the borrower and the lender, while group members are entrusted to manage their credits and fulfill their commitments. Over time, an atmosphere of mutual trust and respect emerges, which enables the scheme to meet its goals.

Loan amounts start with small, short payback periods, allowing the borrower to gradually build up his or her business. Within Romanian groups, loans range from 200 to 1,000 USD for one year. Loan terms are adjusted to fit the economic activities of the borrowers.

The basic elements of the group-based lending include:

Selection methodology
CDF seeks to improve livelihoods by facilitating access to micro-credit. In addition, the program seeks to:

- identify villages with significant Romani minorities, which represent the target group of the Roma Microfinance Program.
**Micro-lending pilot scheme for rural Romani groups in Hungary**

**Implementing organization**

Micro-Credit Public Company was set up by staff of the Autonómia Foundation, which could not operate such a program out of the foundation due to regulations on non-profit organizations in Hungary. The capital start-up was provided by the Opencity Society Institute, New York, which supports similar programs in other countries.

The company does not operate like a bank, with savings and deposits, but rather seeks to serve as a resource for extending loans which can provide for economic success of its clients. The company has very little profit, which is used for the benefit of society.

**Goal of the programs**

To alleviate poverty by providing access to low-interest loans.

**Main activities – types of credit extended**

1) Non-profit loan

NGOs in Hungary carry out a lot of projects, often funded through tendering processes. Due to the disbursement of funds is often late or with operational gaps, especially those related to co-financing schemes. In practice, the projects should start immediately after the contract has been signed. Micro credit pilot scheme for Roma has been running for about one year. Micro credit company must also approve the plan as well, both through the credit administrator and the selection committee.

The credit contact is then posted to the applicant within one week of approval. The contract should be signed by the applicant, the company, and other group members who provide the guarantee. After this process, the credit is transferred to the bank account within five days. The credit is transferred to the client's bank account in one disbursement. From the approved credit, the company takes 2% for administration.

**Utilization of the credit**

The client can only use the loan to fulfill the planned aims of the activity. Only items indicated in the application can be purchased, though the amounts can be changed upon approval from credit administrator. The client should present invoices, vouchers, and any subsequent purchasing agreements for the money spent and the credit administrator audits purchased goods and stocks of the enterprise on-site.

In the case that someone did not utilize the credit in the agreed upon way, but pays back the loan and interest, the company will not prosecute or stop the credit contract, though the client, his relatives and enterprise cannot access future loans.

**Loan repayment**

The size of the loan payment is based on the duration of the credit and grace period according to the estimated cash-flow of the activity. It is calculated together by the company and the client, based on the following formula: Credit amount + previous loan payments / (number of months + 1) * 1.19. An Excel table involving cash flow projections, the grace period and loan payments is used to calculate the amounts. The client received training on this and uses it to calculate the options for repayment.

The minimum duration of credit is three months, with a maximum of one year. Clients can request a maximum grace period of eleven months, though monthly interest still has to be paid. Loan payments should be made by the fifth of each month. If payment hasn’t been received, then the credit administrator informs the group via the secretary. The client will pay interest on the outstanding loan, which is the same amount as the credit interest. The situation of those who cannot pay is discussed at the next meeting, where the group must decide how to handle the case, including agreements on sharing outstanding loan payments, timing and amounts.

**Results**

The total outstanding capital for all three loan programs is about 600,000 euro, including around 120 clients. The micro-credit pilotscheme for Roma has been running for about one year. 80% of the clients are Romani individuals, though not exclusively. The majority of initiatives have become formally registered enterprises, as the appropriateness of the proposed enterprises and the dead-line for setting up the group. For example, in the case of agricultural activities, it is necessary for the credit to arrive before the start of the season.

**Prerequisites for groups**

Group members should not be ‘blacklisted’ for outstanding loan payments. They should be formally accepted by other group members and have an idea which does not exceed the maximum amount calculated on the credit application. If there are no educational requirements, they should be able to present the idea, the expected cash flow (perhaps with some assistance), and do simple budgeting.

**Group membership**

A start-up group is set up with three to six persons, who can serve as the engine of the group, arranging for the first meeting with the credit administrator and identifying eligible new members. New members are accepted by anonymous vote of at least two-thirds of the members. Candidates who are not accepted can request membership again after six months.

**Group start-up**

The setting up of a group usually starts with about 3-5 persons. Here it is decided whether to set up an initiative or not, based on aspects such as the potential number of members, trust among members and the enterprise idea. The group should choose a name for itself. Group meetings take place at least once a month, the location of which should be appropriate. In many cases this is a school room (after hour), a community house, or the mayor’s office.

Group meetings and functioning

The meetings with the credit administrator usually involve discussion of the group members, which show its lending potential, new requests for new members, and presentation of new ideas. The new members make a brief introduction, and then leave the room while discussions and debates take place among the members. Secret ballot voting takes place and the administrator counts the votes.

Then loan payments and possible negotiation over late or missing payments take place on the basis of reports submitted by the group and the financial data. The group then agrees upon what will be done if one member cannot pay.

In case there are new credit requests, these are discussed and should be approved first by the group or an elected council in the case of large groups. The credit administrator then makes an appointment with the accepted loan recipients for a training session on how to prepare all the documentation for the credit application, which includes a business plan, and of the group take responsibility for each credit request, and need to have a group contract as guarantee, signed by all members.

After the meeting, the credit administrator drafts the minutes, which should be signed by the secretary of the group. The secretary is also the main contact person with the credit administrator about issues and outstanding loan payments.

**Loan Transfer**

One of the most important rules in the approval of loans is that application has to be supported by all members, since they all must guarantee that the loan will be repaid. If someone’s credit idea is not approved, it can be reworked and presented at subsequent meetings. The results of the election are documented in the official minutes, which are notified by the secretary. The Micro-credit company must also approve the plan as well, both through the credit administrator and the selection committee.

**Results**

The overall capital outstanding for all three loan programs is about 600,000 euro, including around 120 clients. The micro-credit pilot scheme for Roma has been running for about one year. Currently there are six groups from different parts of the country, where all but one has been functioning as planned. Some have already completed the first cycle and accessed new loans, while expanding their groups with new members. For the most part, groups are formed of Romani individuals, though not exclusively. The majority of initiatives have become formally registered enterprises.
vision of the future that they would like to see in about 3-5 years time. Their vision of the future needs to be realistic, since they are

After defining the situation, community members are encouraged to

For a variety of reasons, many

ences and resources to pilot a goat breeding program in two Romani communities of Central Romania.

In this program, Heifer and RCRC combined approaches, experi-

- is passed on for each goat received. Recipients are new families selected by the committee based on the initial 

In the Heifer model for working with community groups, the process begins with community members defining their 

Defining the current situation, envisioning the future and plan-

Gradual development over time rather than one-time projects

A positive element to ongoing civic lending mechanisms is the ability to 

management, in view of building capacities within the community

Goal

The main goal is to help the Romani community in Nemsa over-

CASE EXAMPLES

Goat-breeding with revolving community donations in Nemsa – (Heifer Romania and the Resource Center for Roma Communities)

Implementing organizations

Heifer is an international, non-profit organization working throughout the world with the mission to work with communities to end poverty and hunger and to care for the earth. While the methods vary over continents and time, the traditional approach has been to introduce heifers (young cows) or other livestock into communities, accompanied by an awareness building and training process for participating families. Families are 'indebted' for the cost of the livestock, until they 'repay' by giving another needy family the same amount they received.

The Resource Center for Roma Communities (RCRC) is a nonprofit organization founded in 1999 by the Soros Foundation for an Open Society in Romania, with the mission to improve the living conditions of Roma in Romania. RCRC has managed a series of programs to develop capacities among young Roma and initiative groups in Romani and ethnically mixed communities, in view of promoting more effective human rights and development interventions. In addition, the organization has played a key role in assisting the administration and monitoring of government programs connected to the National Strategy to Improve the Situation of Roma.

2. Selection of recipient families.
3. Training in animal husbandry and community building.
4. Providing goats, which are ‘repaid’ by providing new female kid goats to other families.

Methods Employed

Facilitation and capacity building prior to the introduction of Heifer goats.

Prior to the introduction of Heifer, an initiative group from Nemsa was part of the community development faciliation program of CRRC, which involved training and facilitation among Romani initiative groups in the region, with the aim of building capacities among locals, so that they could access various development opportunities related to the governmental strategy to improve the situation of Roma, amongst others.

Defining the current situation, envisioning the future and plan-

In the Heifer model for working with community groups, the process begins with community members defining their current situation, in terms of the resources available such as rainfall, agri-

The village Nemsa is situated in Sibiu County (Transylvania), 15 kilometers away from the larger town Medias, in a hilly region. Post-communist economic depression is at home in this area, located far from large cities and thus from the opportunities they offer. The village consists of 75% Roma, 20% Romanian and 5% Hungarian and German. In early 1990s the Roma ‘colonized’ Nemsa, an almost deserted village previously inhabited by Germans. Now they are settled and own small properties, while practicing modern agriculture: milk production, meat, livestock and hides. The average farm size is 0.8 hectares. Animals are fed on com-

enterprises. In the new European Union member states, the predominating open tendering process for larger scale programs makes it extremely difficult for small community groups and individuals, without prior experience or resources, to start up new activities by successfully completing the more complicated application procedures and criteria for funding.

At the same time, it must be recognized that civic initiatives, at times more flexible, easily accessible and able to invest over time, don’t have the resources to address communities and issues on the scale needed. They can provide good examples and insights to possible programs, but cannot provide the structural response on the national level.

Start-up enterprises and sustainability – meeting the challenges of market competitive-

Group lending mechanisms for individual entrepre-

Though included in the section for enterprise development, some approaches are border line income-generating (through perhaps entrepreneurial), since they are not legally registered enterprises. Group lending mechanisms employing moral guarantees among its members serves as an alternative for individuals without access to traditional credit programs which require a stable job (work contract) or initial capital. Still, beneficiaries must have an initial degree of experience in order to access such programs. In work-

ing with successful groups, organizers found it important to establish good working relations with community leaders and to build trust. Since each member is dependent, in a sense, on another, the group mechanism also contributes to developing trust and mutual support among its members. At the same time, if one

ACCESS TO EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME OPPORTUNITIES • APPROACHES AND METHODS AMONG ROMA AND OTHER DISADVANTAGED GROUPS

Access to income-generating initiatives for groups and individuals

INCOME-GENERATING INITIATIVES FOR GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS

Background

The village Nemsa is situated in Sibiu County (Transylvania), 15 kilometers away from the larger town Medias, in a hilly region. Post-communist economic depression is at home in this area, located far from large cities and thus from the opportunities they offer. The village consists of 75% Roma, 20% Romanian and 5% Hungarian and German. In early 1990s the Roma ‘colonized’ Nemsa, an almost deserted village previously inhabited by Germans. Now they are settled and own small properties, while practicing modern agriculture: milk production, meat, livestock and hides. The average farm size is 0.8 hectares. Animals are fed on community pastures. Heifer International provided funds to plant 9,000 tree seedlings on the slopes around the village in order to stop soil erosion. As there is a great demand for dairy products in family consump-

One-time projects


tion, about 60% of the products will be used in the home, the rest being planned for marketing in the nearby town of Medias, 15 kilometers from the village.


goal, the investment into the community is deferred, to later enhance its viability and sustainability. The investment in the community can be used to seed other projects, where the cash generated from the initial project by developing strategies in order to move from their present situation to the desired future. These strategies normally include the use of animals to produce food, and to generate income for the participating families. Pertinent information obtained through defining the situation (such as rainfall, agriculture potential of the land, supply of fodder etc) is used to determine the type of animals that should be kept. Strategies and objectives are determined and used to develop a relevant, prioritized, train-

ing plan. The project is then established as planned.

Providing goats to selected families

In Nemsa, Heifer provided fifteen families with three goats each in the first year. In the second year the same families would receive another three goats, and at the same time fifteen new families will receive their first list of three goats. In the third year, the latter will stop and go with the goats. Ten bucks in the first year and five in the second will be provided to improve the breed.

The original recipients were chosen by a committee taking into account the eligibility criteria. The criteria for selecting the beneficiaries are:

• Number of children,
• Income per person (poor families),
• Skills in animal breeding,
• Shelter and fodder available,
• Acknowledgment of Heifer cornerstones,
• Unemployment,
• Participation in group activities and training.

Priority in distributing the livestock was given to poor families with many children, to families who have good sheltering conditions and fodder for livestock, to the unemployed and to the ones with tradition in animal breeding.

Capacity building for animal breeding and community organizing initiatives

All recipients had to attend trainings and to improve their animals’ shelters (space, luminosity and ventilation are especially consid-

tered). Heifer Romania members and consultants organized train-

ings in the following: Heifer cornerstones, livestock health, live-

stock shelters, environmental improvement, hygiene to ensure quality and cleanliness of farm products, new practices in sustain-

able agriculture like the reduction of pesticides, crop rotation and composting. In addition, specialists from the Resource Centre for Roma Communities and Heifer Romania staff organized training in leadership, community building, proposal writing, and project management, in view of building capacities within the community for starting new initiatives.

Passing on the ‘gift’

In the Heifer tradition, the ‘gift’ - a female kid goat of 15 kg or more - is passed on for each goat received. Recipients are new families selected by the committee based on the initial selection criteria. The main objective will be used for reproduction, slaughtered for home consumption or sold. Working together, sharing resources and participating in meetings, training sessions and exchange visits are expected to contribute to the growth of the group and to strengthen the community.

ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT

ANALYSIS AND INSIGHTS

Group lending mechanisms for individual entrepre-

though many partially realized, the investment into building capacities and experience was sustainable, since groups could continue to develop other ideas or initiatives in the communities’ interest, thus contributing to an overall process of development.

though included in the section for enterprise development, some approaches are border line income-generating (through perhaps entrepreneurial), since they are not legally registered enterprises. Group lending mechanisms employing moral guarantees among its members serves as an alternative for individuals without access to traditional credit programs which require a stable job (work contract) or initial capital. Still, beneficiaries must have an initial degree of experience in order to access such programs. In working with successful groups, organizers found it important to establish good working relations with community leaders and to build trust. Since each member is dependent, in a sense, on another, the group mechanism also contributes to developing trust and mutual support among its members. At the same time, if one doesn’t have a ‘group’, then the program is not accessible, and there may be persons who are excluded for reasons other than the ability to implement a good initiative.

A positive element to ongoing civic lending mechanisms is the ability to work with local community groups over a longer period of time, starting out with small support with relatively simple applica-

procedure and providing the possibility to gradually build up larger credits for entrepreneurial activities. In the new European Union member states, the predominating open tendering process for larger scale programs makes it extremely difficult for small community groups and individuals, without prior experience or resources, to start up new activities by successfully completing the more complicated application procedures and criteria for funding.

At the same time, it must be recognized that civic initiatives, at times more flexible, easily accessible and able to invest over time, don’t have the resources to address communities and issues on the scale needed. They can provide good examples and insights to possible programs, but cannot provide the structural response on the national level.

Over the last ten years, there have been a considerable number of programs to support the setting up of income-generating, social enterprises. Donated and related limited companies. Activities such as production workshops (pajal-making, brick-mak-

ing, sewing, carpentry), collective animal breeding and agricultural production have all been supported, though overall results in terms of sustainability are limited at best. For a variety of reasons, many of the initiatives had to be abandoned due to inability to gain sufficient clients, management problems, market fluctuations, insufficient turnover or weak social capital within communities or in rela-


tion to other social and commercial networks. At the same time, in some cases, even when the ‘business’ and job creation aspect failed or only partially realized, the investment into building capacities and experience was sustainable, since groups could continue to develop other ideas or initiatives in the communities’ interest, thus contributing to an overall process of development.
The first fifteen direct beneficiaries of the project already made the first passing on of female kid goats for a new series of beneficiaries and the people have come to see the process as a normal one. Furthermore, the original project idea has been expanded when the local municipality from Nemsa gained support from UNDP to collect the milk from the people, so that community members could make cheese. In comparison with the first year, the number of families fulfilling the criteria to manage goats is steadily increasing, as more people see the benefits of the program, and believe it can work. According to RCC monitors, the most important result is that people started to think and make plans for the future, and to be trustful in their own forces. Discussions have also begun on setting up an independent association.

Poverty, Ethnicity and Agricultural development programs in Hungary (Autónómia Foundation)

Implementing organization

Autónómia is an independent, private foundation contributing to the development of civil society in Hungary through the support of independent local initiatives. Since its establishment in 1990, the foundation has delivered more than 1,200 grants in support of concrete projects in about 600 settlements. Autónómia has been the only private foundation in Hungary to fund over 500 initiatives and development projects of Roma, primarily in agriculture and farming.

From the early 1990’s to the early 2000s, Autónómia, like others, enjoyed the support of private US and European foundations, from which it could develop its independent, grant-making programs, especially the Poverty and Ethnicity Program supporting grassroots Roma income-generating initiatives. As Hungary prepared to join the European Union in 2004, so the funding climate in Central Europe also changed, with increasing reliance on governmental and EU funds, especially Structural Funds. As a result, the regular, easily accessible and non-political grant-making and loan programs of the foundation are for the most part a thing of the past, though the foundation continues to search for new possibilities to re-start such programs, while operating various Structural Fund projects in cooperation with former local grantees. As one of the early pioneers in operating long-term grant and loan programs for income-generating activities among Roma, the report includes a summary of the main methods employed.

Results

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Background of program operations

Support is targeted geographically to areas of high unemployment and poverty, where there are large concentrations of Roma, largely in the Western and Southwest of Hungary. This effectively means to rural areas and villages. About 80% of Autónómia’s support was to rural areas.

Most of the applications were for rural agricultural projects, challenging popular perceptions that Roma do not want to cultivate land. The projects supported were run by people who had the motivation to take action for themselves and their communities. The types of supported initiatives included a) survival projects – growing food for participating families and the local community or b) development projects – income-generating activities, which create employment and have longer term prospects.

The types of projects varied enormously: from pig breeding to growing raspberries, making adobe and concrete columns, pallet-making workshops and basket weaving.

Methods

Providing grants and loan to local Roma and ethnically mixed organizations

Autónómia provided funding in the form of a combination of grant and interest-free loan, together with support on developing the project and ensuring it is viable. Survival projects tend to receive a grant covering 75% of the total project, and a loan of 25%, as they cannot be guaranteed to generate enough income to continue activities in the future, and are very dependent on the weather. Development projects tend to receive a mix of grant and loan (up to 50%), with mutually agreed repayment terms for the loan based on the projected income of the project. Support is awarded on the basis of a contract, the terms of which are discussed and decided by the local organization and foundation staff.

Regular monitoring

The success of funded projects was backed by the foundation’s use of regular monitoring to assess initial project ideas and community preparedness, along with regular monitoring once a project was supported. Monitors talked through the details with projects leaders and helped to ensure that projects are not just dreams, but have a firm basis in reality and that the people involved have the relevant skills.

Own contribution

Secondly the applicant organizations should make an up front contribution themselves, which helps to ensure their full commitment and sense of responsibility. Furthermore, it was common practice to inform publicly the people in the village, to avoid potential misunderstandings and to encourage co-operation and joint action.

Skill building

Overtime, Autónómia also recognized the need for additional capacity and skills building among some of its local partners. In this regard, additional program activities to build skills such as project management, team building, business development and fundraising were also provided to a number of organizational leaders.

Project support ceiling

In supporting local income-generating initiatives, the amount of support for one project was limited, depending on the program and type of activity. For smaller scale family gardening, support was usually up to about 2,000 USD, while more advanced projects could be supported with a maximum of 10,000 USD.

Subsequent loan possibility

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Subsequent loan possibility

Most programs included the possibility for local organizations to benefit from a subsequent loan once the initial loan had been repaid and all other contract obligations fulfilled. This method has been recognized as an effective tool creating repayment incentives among groups with no formal collateral.

Integrated program steps – the Roma Agricultural Development Program

In 1998, the foundation formalized this process by creating a framework for local organizations to engage in a longer-term process, involving gradual development of local initiatives.

The aim was to provide an opportunity for Roma participants to start and develop their business activity and to deepen their professional skills. The laboratory invited proposal ideas for a level for Kitchen garden and Small Animal Breeding initiatives. Kitchen garden projects involved one-year support for tools, fertilizers and farming techniques, which had not been used before, thus increasing local capacities among participating families for successful gardening.

The second level (Roma Farming Program) was available for applicants who had already completed a basic project of the foundation or a similar grant-giving organization successfully and would like to continue their activity on a higher level. At the second level, organizations engaged in a two-year program, with the aim to farm as independent producers. Profit from the first stage of the grant was to be reinvested further developing the initiative in the second stage.

Results

In looking back at supported initiatives, for the most part, local organizations succeeded to implement their projects, and repay the support they enjoyed the support, with more than 80% successful rate. However, over time, few initiatives were truly sustainable in the economic sense, due to difficulties in finding markets, over-saturation of markets, decreasing value of produce for sale, or other aspects making it difficult to continue. At the same time, the projects served local communities and leaders in other ways, such as increasing political capacities, management skills, and self-confidence from the experience of being managers and owners of their own enterprises. There are a number of cases where local organizations ‘reappear’ within a year or two, by accessing other opportunities and programs.

Community banking in Biala Slatina, Bulgaria (Pakiv European Roma Fund and Alternativa NGO- Biala Slatina)

Implementing organizations

The Pakiv European Roma Fund is an international organization launched in 2001, with support from the World Bank. Since 2001, PAKV has been active in organizing international capacity building and leadership programs for young Roma and supporting the PKF Balkan Roma Foundation in expanding its capacity to assist local communities to carry out local development actions, especially in the areas of income generation and capacity building for social responsibility and change. In combating socio-economic exclusion amongst Roma, PERF has been experimenting with the facilitation of community banking or revolving funds 48. Alternativa is a local community-based organization (CBO) in Biala Slatina, formed of Romani youth from the town. The organization had been working on educational activities for about two-three years and decided to develop an income-generating component, based on the experience, meeting goals and discussions with community members about what can be done. The total amount of the project support was 7,276 USD.

Background of the locality

Biala Slatina is a small town in North Bulgaria with a total population of about 13,923, of which the Roma account for about 3,000. Working as laborers in agricultural cooperatives and animal farms was the main source of occupation prior to the economic restructuring. Today, finding seasonal work as agricultural laborers and part-time work in a local carinery serve as the main source of temporary employment for many Romani families in the town. Here the minimum wage is about 50 USD per month. As with much of the Romani population, educational levels are generally low, the majority of families rely on social benefits as the most stable form of income. Very few Romani inhabitants have permanent work.

Main activities

1. Start up a sheep-breeding program for individual families in the Romani neighborhood.
2. Enhance the group’s production of five sheep and two months fodder, on condition that they pay back 80% of the total investment.
3. The repayment would form the basis of a revolving fund, or bank for the community to continue supporting other income-generating activities.
4. Human rights awareness building through dialogue with local authorities.

Methods

Enhancing community participation through setting up a public council

In starting up the project, a new structure – the public council – was set up in order to provide for greater community representation, participation and control in the decision-making processes concerning the project. The public council was formed of five elected members from the community and two representatives of the CBO. The elected members are nominated and then voted on by community members, thus should be considered well-respected, influential, and financially independent. The council also served as a mechanism to increase trust between the CBO and the other community members, and serve as another incentive for beneficiaries to repay their loans (e.g. maintain trust and respect from important community members).

The role of the public council was to:
- play the role of a filter for becoming a beneficiary in the project,
- select beneficiaries from amongst the applicants,
- research the market and purchase the sheep that would be disbursed to the families,
- take decisions over problems and modifying plans and pro-
Finally, disadvantaged regions often have little to offer in terms of labor market possibilities. The economic restructuring has left regions with higher levels of unemployment than the national community bank was about 75%, owing to late payments. The opportunities, due to geographical targeting, personal or professional history of common action, are not available to all. While there is no single ‘recipe for success’, in the sense that local interactions among community members and with local institutions, and where community organization and representation is weak. In any case, the issue requires more thought and discussion, weighing out various possibilities, perhaps considering greater linkages among programs over time, where successful funded ‘projects’ have better chances to be renewed in following years.

It is important to underline the social and psychological impact that such programs can have on excluded communities, where the image of groups that have ‘failed’ in social, educational or economic terms are generally negative. In such cases, support of local initiatives have served to break away from the cycle of dependency, such outcomes are slow. A letter from the employment center announcing a job may take a week to arrive, and by the time he or she can make it to the center, the job has already been taken.

In some cases, especially Hungary for example, locals are also confronted with barriers related to public transportation, since train and bus services are inefficient in smaller settlements, and it is difficult, if not impossible, to travel a distance of 20-30 km. In the case that they can get to work on time, the price of monthly passes proves to be too much. A monthly adult pass for a distance of 40 km is around 140 Euro, which is 60% of the minimum wage and few opportunities, especially for unskilled and semi-skilled workers. Likewise, a town or village only needs so many shops, so what remains is the option of opening a small shop or vegetable stand, or other endeavors. While there may be jobs for a few graduates, the market can simply not absorb all those completing the courses. Perhaps the only option would be to move to a larger city, though higher housing and living costs makes this difficult.

Therefore, in attempting to access to employment and income among Roma living in disadvantaged regions, policy makers should take into consideration such phenomena, since they may not increase the chances for programs to fulfill their long term goals. Furthermore, increased access to second chance educational opportunities, taking into consideration seasonal work habits and travel needs, will be important to opening up vocational qualification, among those without completed primary and secondary education.

Project approach versus development processes

While programs can have a positive impact in the sense of providing income, improving skills, motivation and self-confidence when framed in the context of one-time projects, it also contributes to the maintenance of dependency and relative instability, since projects often last no more than 1 – 2 years. Substantive change, in the multifaceted elements of poverty, takes real commitment and time, including the possibility to grow in pace with the development of local capabilities. Therefore, approaches should support the idea that sustainable change requires a longer-term process rather than a short-term project.

It is also important to note the difference between job ‘creation’ or ‘placement’ within projects for a limited period of time, since the work contracts may be terminated at the end of the project. While the experience may indeed help participants re-enter the labor market subsequently, it should not be taken for granted.

With the limits of ‘project funding’ being increasingly discussed, the idea of some normative distribution of funds has also been proposed. However, some experts have pointed out that there is an inherent danger that participants may lose innovation, and support- ed initiatives may become rigid and less in line with market needs and factors over time, relying on funding for the new system.

In any case, the issue requires more thought and discussion, weighing out various possibilities, perhaps considering greater linkages among programs over time, where successful funded ‘projects’ have better chances to be renewed in following years.

Competitive tenders and reaching those in need

The way in which communities are approached is another important aspect, for which organizations and programs often differ. Among civic organizations, there are open calls for proposals, at times and representatives steps. In the case that the job has already been taken.

Finally, disadvantaged regions often have little to offer in terms of labor market possibilities. The economic restructuring has left regions with higher levels of unemployment than the national average, and few opportunities, especially for unskilled and semi-skilled workers. Likewise, a town or village only needs so many shops, so what remains is the option of opening a small shop or vegetable stand, or other endeavors. While there may be jobs for a few graduates, the market can simply not absorb all those completing the courses. Perhaps the only option would be to move to a larger city, though higher housing and living costs makes this difficult.

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open tendering process for larger-scale programs makes it extremely difficult for small community groups and individuals without prior experience to start up new activities. In addition to the importance of implementing anti-discrimination legislation and regulations, the gravity of the situation requires a more inter-sectoral approach, aimed at strengthening social membership, unlike the predominant project-oriented approach. In this way, Roma’s social membership would be reinforced by increasing the space and frequency of social interactions between Roma and non-Roma in the media, politics, reconstruction of segregated dwellings and education, work place and public services, amongst others.

Capacity building as cross-cutting

PAW promotes capacity building at a key method to mobilising and working with disadvantaged groups. Indeed one common method throughout a number of different approaches is that of capacity building activities for Romani individuals and organizations implementing the initiatives. While capacity building can involve a number of different techniques, there seem to be some common factors which need to be considered. Within excluded and isolated communities, both within and without, those who develop a state of apathy, without hope or belief that their situation can improve and that they can take an active role in making such change happen. Due to neglect and low self-esteem, often these people lack the self-confidence and have difficulties in ‘marketing’ or ‘selling’ their qualities when applying for a job. At the same time, much of their prior work experience may have been as laborers without significant management responsibilities, and the contempt and misperceptions of even their own community members also affects them. With already existing actions, others where there is no formal organisational experience.

Therefore, program elements to invest in the strengthening of human resource capacities, as individuals and within groups, can help increase the chances that local initiatives will be successful, especially in terms of empowering locals to manage such processes area once the project period has finished. Furthermore, even if the income or economic element is not sustainable, investments in the way people usually are. Organizations have employed a number of different techniques, including pre-action facilitation within communities to build trust, teams, communication, participation and skills. This has involved formal training elements along with monitored or monitored processes of identifying, managing and evaluating a small community action. Usually such actions should be viable either for some pro-bono volunteers who can assist and social responsibility, and when possible cooperate arrangements with local institutions. Skills-building also includes related themes such as local self-help project Roma, laptop training and management, proposal writing, CV preparation and interview, business development and computer literacy.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In summarizing the overall impact of programs and projects presented in this report, it is fair to say that there have been mixed results. On the one hand, there are a number of positive cases where beneficiaries have obtained employment or new forms of income, along with new skills, experience and perspectives for social change. On the other hand, many programs provide for capacity building work experience for a limited period of time rather than stable jobs. Likewise, community-based income-generating initiatives have proven difficult to sustain beyond the project period, and relatively few can mature to beyond the project period, and relatively few can mature to beyond the project period, and relatively few can mature to beyond the project period, and relatively few can mature to beyond the project period, and relatively few can mature to... 

The current state of unacknowledged social membership is wider and more complex Structural Fund programs. In addition, it has been recommended that governments consider establishing consultancy facilities or networks, which can assist local communities in preparing and developing ideas and proposals, and perhaps use a more proactive approach to facilitate such initiatives in areas where little is happening.

Discrimination, social membership and inter-sectoral public policies

Though the report has not addressed anti-Roma discrimination so much in detail, it is relatively common knowledge that prejudice and discrimination are common place and serve as a barrier to employment opportunities. In terms of labor market access and enterprise development, Roma confront discrimination in obtaining jobs or even informal work (due to influx of cheap ‘white’ laborers from neighboring countries and competing successfully on the market with products. Likewise, the predominant welfare employment tool of public works programs tends to conserve this tradition. The more natural way of the work does not command respect among majority community members or institutions), and rather than secure labor market integration, they tend to strengthen dependence on benefits.

The total amount of funding available for EQUAL Community Initiative Programme in Hungary for the period of 2004-2006 is 40,389,513 Euros, of which 30,292,135 Euros is from the Structural Funds coupled with 10,097,378 Euros, a national contribution from the Hungarian Central Budget.

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NOTES

4. European Social Fund
5. Kertesi Gábor – Kézdi Gábor: The Roma population in Hungary ... the publications of the Employment Centre of BÁZ County, as well as information provided by local Roma organizations.
6. The current state of unacknowledged social membership is wider and more complex Structural Fund programs. In addition, it has been recommended that governments consider establishing consultancy facilities or networks, which can assist local communities in preparing and developing ideas and proposals, and perhaps use a more proactive approach to facilitate such initiatives in areas where little is happening.
7. Statistics for a research carried out by Ramonés foundation and the local Agency for Work Force Placement, 2003, involving 721 local Roma (68% men, 32% women).
8. Personal example: Mr. Mircea is a 65-year-old Romani living in Arges County, a former mining area. Due to the mine closure and limited opportunities in the region, unemployment is high, reaching 45%. While surviving on this alone is difficult enough, starting and sustaining a small farming activity is almost impossible.
9. Personal example: Mr. Mihai is a 65-year-old Romani living in Arges County, a former mining area. Due to the mine closure and limited opportunities in the region, unemployment is high, reaching 45%. While surviving on this alone is difficult enough, starting and sustaining a small farming activity is almost impossible.
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Since he respected the contract and repaid the loan, he was eligible for another loan which he took in September 2005.

32 Amaro Drom (Albania), Autonómia Foundation (Hungary), Ramovi CRISS (Romania) and Pakiv European Roma Fund.

33 Based on discussions concerning various initiatives supported by the Autonómia Foundation (Hungary), Romovi CRISS (Romania) and Pakiv European Roma Fund.

34 Brief example: The Rom Som Foundation of Tomor was one of the supported applicants of the first level of the Roma Agricultural Development Program. The Rom Som Foundation proposed a subsistence project based on goat keeping and cheese production with the involvement of five families. From November 2000 to October 2001 they renovated the goat-folds, bought 25 dairy goats and one he-goat, attended a course on animal breeding and livestock healthcare, started to process the milk of the goats and sell the products. Their project proved to be successful on the first level; they could invest the required contribution into the second year’s program. They bought more animals, and purchased and renovated a building, which is to be the center of milk collection and cheese making.

35 The community banking model is one which essentially treats the whole community as one unit, and establishes semi-formal or formal institutions through which microfinance is dispensed. Such institutions are usually formed by extensive help from NGOs and other organizations, who also train the community members in various financial activities of the community bank. These institutions may have savings components and other income-generating projects included in their structure. In many cases, community banks are also part of larger community development programmes, which use finance as an inducement for action. (Grameen Communications 1998, http://www.grameen-info.org/mcredit/mmodel.htm)

36 Education activities of the organization have been part of the Creative Effective Grassroots Alternatives network of supported organizations.

37 In May, families would be required to pay back a greater amount since it was expected that they would be able to sell more sheep since the St. George Day celebration (May 8) is a popular celebration involving the cooking of at least one lamb per family.

38 In the other two cases, one family sold the sheep in order to form part of other community projects was removed, since it seems too vague in light of more complex programs addressing Roma, and it is common practice of local organizations engaging in a variety of community development initiatives, at least over time.

39 It is worth noting, that some income-generation and job creation methods first presented in a report, “Toward a Pakiv European Roma Fund – Income-generating programs for Roma in Central and Eastern Europe,” written by the European Roma and the Freudentberg Foundation in 1998. The original categories were: 1) poverty alleviation via income generation, 2) food for subsistence, agriculture and land for survival, 3) employment opportunities, striving for empowerment, 4) work and income, including job creation, 5) community development where income-generating activities form part of other community projects, 6) training future Roma entrepreneurs, 7) self-organization of Roma entrepreneurs and self-employers, 8) self-organization of Roma traveling commercial dealers, 9) Roma associations running their own (construction) businesses.

40 In the revised classification, four major categories were created, which seem to reflect better the overall approaches, where sub-categories further define methods. These include: 1) access to labor market, active labor market policies and enterprise development, 2) community development, 3) income-generation for Romani individuals and groups, 4) self-organization and association of Romani entrepreneurs. Compared to the first classification, categories such as poverty alleviation via income-generation and food for subsistence are joined together under income-generation for Romani individuals and groups, since the bulk of such programs support various agricultural, farming or livestock initiatives for supplementary, informal income and consumption. The section on community development, where income-generating activities form part of other community projects was removed, since it seems too vague in light of more complex programs addressing Roma, and it is common practice of local organizations engaging in a variety of community development initiatives, at least over time.

41 The list is not exhaustive. Indeed comments, additions and suggestions on how to improve and complete the list are welcome.

42 Amaro Drom (Albania), Autonómia Foundation (Hungary), Creating Effective Grassroots Alternatives (Bulgaria), Heifer International (Slovakia, Romania), Impreuna Agency (Romania), Pakiv European Roma Fund (Bulgaria), Ramses Foundation for the Social Development of Roma (Romania), Romano-Lom Foundation (Bulgaria), a number of local partnerships with projects funded by Structural Funds addressing disadvantaged groups.

43 Linking ‘voluntary work’ to social benefits to activate long-term, unemployed job-seekers

44 Romanian municipalities, Slovak structural fund program.

45 Local Public Works

46 Local municipalities and labor bureaus.

47 ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT

Training future Roma entrepreneurs

Autonómia Foundation (Hungary), Foundation for Regional Development (Slovakia), PHARE supported program on entrepreneurship and local and regional development, Prince of Wales Business Leaders Forum (Czech Republic), Roma-Lom Foundation (Bulgaria), Romanian Centre for Small and Medium Size Enterprises and Romovi CRISS (Romania).

Start-up of non-profit Roma organizations and associations developing their own productive enterprises for income-generation and job creation

Autonómia Foundation (Hungary), Impreuna Agency (Romania), National Employment Fund (Hungary), Pakiv European Roma Fund (Bulgaria), Ramses Foundation (Romania), Romovi CRISS (Romania) in partnership with ADERom, Projectbureau for the Promotion of Roma Initiatives, Diakonisches Werk der EKD, Germany.

Micro-credit for Roma entrepreneurs and small enterprise development

Center for Economic Development (Romania), Micro-credit Public Company (Hungary), Roma-Lom Foundation (Bulgaria).

Development partnerships among local municipalities and Romani initiative groups and NGOs for starting up income-generating activities

Romanian government - Phare Programme to implement the National Strategy to improve the Situation of Roma.

Examples are drawn from both past and present programs (rather than projects), and the list is in no way exhaustive. Indented comments, additions and suggestions on how to improve and complete the list are welcome.

ACCESS TO EMPLOYMENT AND INCOME OPPORTUNITIES • APPROACHES AND METHODS AMONG ROMA AND OTHER DISADVANTAGED GROUPS

INCOME-GENERATION FOR ROMANI GROUPS AND INDIVIDUALS

Self-help production of livestock, food for survival/better living

32 Amaro Drom (Albania), Autonómia Foundation (Hungary), Creating Effective Grassroots Alternatives (Bulgaria), Heifer International (Slovakia, Romania), Impreuna Agency (Romania), Pakiv European Roma Fund (Bulgaria), Romanian Public Foundation for Roma in Hungary, Spolu International (The Netherlands) with national and local partners in Albania, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Romania and Slovakia, Trickle Up (Slovakia).

Mediating temporary, seasonal and informal work

Roma – Lom Foundation (Bulgaria), local Roma leaders and NGOs may also be expected to take this role in an informal manner.

SELF ORGANIZATION AND ASSOCIATION OF ROMANI ENTREPRENEURS

Association of Romani entrepreneurs and self-employed

Association of Patrons, Bucharest and Ploiesti - Romania.

Romani Traveling Commercial Dealers in the form of a co-operatives

APPONA - Association for the Promotion of the Population of Nomadic Origin in Abacc (Credit and handicraft cooperative especially for women and young Roma).
12TH OSCE ECONOMIC FORUM RAPPORTEUR’S REPORT ON THE SIDE EVENT:

“Promoting entrepreneurship and opportunities for economic development for Roma and Sinti” June 2, 2004

On 2 June 2004 a side event focused on promoting entrepre-
neurship and opportunities for economic development for Roma
and Sinti communities was held during the OSCE Economic
Forum. The purpose of the meeting was to explore ways and means of developing related activities, and
enhance the co-operation between OSCE, the ODIHR-CPRSI, as
well as representatives of international organisations, governments and
NGOs, also with a view to implementing the relevant provisions of
the Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti
within the OSCE Area, adopted at the Maastricht Ministerial
Council (M-DCE/3/03).

The side event was chaired by Ambassador Lulu Aurelian Bota,
Permanent Representative of Romania to the OSCE. The Chair
spoke about the challenges and achievements related to the
OSCE Action Plan and the work of the OSCE in promoting
social development as well as the specific needs of Roma and Sinti
peoples. Ms. Bota was also involved in the side event and was
invited to address the issue of entrepreneurship.

Mr. Nicolae Gheorghie, OSCE-CICHR Contact Point on Roma
and Sinti issues, referred at his turn to the provisions of the Action
Plan as well as to the background document distributed in the
preparation of the side event (CPD-GAL/3/04) and highlighted the
relevance of this first discussion of Roma and Sinti issues within the
economic dimension and the potential for further co-operation
between his office, the OCEEA and other partners in supporting
the development of the employability and entrepreneurial skills
of Roma and Sinti and their entrepreneurship, economic and social
insertion, SME development, etc.

To launch the discussion, two presentations were delivered by
Mr. Palv - European Roma Fund: Ms. Bari Judit (Hungary) and
Ms. Erika Adamova (Slovakia). They focused on the potential
follow-up activities and the need for social start-up capital
should be considered. A fund to support the development of
Roma communities could be created with the support of the
OSCE. Further discussions on this issue could be envisaged.

The following conclusions and recommendations could be drawn:

1. Addressing the needs of many Roma and Sinti communities
should be considered an issue of emergency, as most Roma
and Sinti communities are confronted with extreme poverty, high
unemployment of up to 80-90%, affecting also very much the
youth, as well as social and economic marginalization.

2. Various projects and activities should be more integrated into
a cross-dimensional process. Various national and inter-
national networks for discussions should provide feedback to
this “learning by doing” process, identify best practices and
avoid repeating the mistakes.

3. Participating States should first and foremost demonstrate
political will to tackle these issues, and adopt and implement
relevant policies. Countries should also resort to the assistance
of organizations such as the World Bank, the Council of
Europe, the European Commission, the Open Society
Institute, IOM and others, which have been mentioned
as potential partners.

4. The OSCE can at its turn provide and mobilize advice and
assistance and can also develop activities to support the Roma
and Sinti communities directly.

5. Reporting on the actual situation of Roma communities and
assessment of the needs should be improved.

6. Social policy reforms should carefully assess the impact on
Roma communities and take into account their needs. These
policies should combat the dependency trends. Furthermore,
employment policies should be harmonized with social poli-
cies.

7. Roma and Sinti are often confronted with discrimination
on the labour market. This negative phenomenon must be
addressed by the participating States through adequate policies
and regulations, including affirmative action. The adaptation
and replication of projects such as the Fair Employment
Program developed by the OSCE Mission to Bosnia and
Herzegovina could be considered and supported by the OSCE.

8. Community based activities were considered extremely
effective at the local level to mobilize the community.

9. Providing training for employment is essential for social inclu-
sion. Participating States should continue and further enhance
their efforts in this regard. OSCE can provide support and in
particular the Youth Entrepreneurship Seminar (YES) pro-
gramme can be adapted and implemented to target the needs
of Roma communities. Other OSCE activities in the area of voca-
tional training or promoting economic empowerment for
marginalized, underserved local communities could be replicated.

10. Issues such as business ethics and business for social respons-
ability were considered important and could be promoted.

11. To complement training activities and support income gener-
atation at community level the need for social start-up capital
should be considered. A fund to support the development of
Roma communities could be created with the support of the
OSCE. Further discussions on this issue could be envisaged.

12. Due to the extreme poverty, trafficking in human beings can
affect Roma and Sinti communities. Necessary measures to
combat this phenomenon should be taken at national and local
levels, including in the framework of the OSCE anti-
trafficking programme, in particular its sub-programme III
economic empowerment.

13. Participants agreed that the side event was a useful exercise
and that discussion on these issues should continue. As an im-
mediate follow-up debates and roundtables at national and
local level could be organized and should focus on concrete
issues.

14. Within the OSCE framework issues related to social inclusion
and economic discrimination could be addressed by the
Human Dimension Implementation Meeting in Warsaw.

15. Roma and Sinti related issues could also be included on the
agenda of the next year’s OSCE Economic Forum.
The central goal should be the inclusion and integration of Roma and Sinti, to facilitate inclusion and prevent discrimination, thereby laying firm and sound foundations for a successful and equal integration of Roma and Sinti. Target not only the Roma, but the whole population, so as to improve the situation of Roma and Sinti. Programmes and activities for integrating the Roma should not simply focus on the Roma themselves, but should focus on local communities, and therefore aim at improving living conditions and quality of life for all. The interventions by participants underscored the need for improved co-operation between the different programmes and initiatives (OSCE Action Plan, EU National Action Plans, programmes and projects of international organizations). The central goal should be the inclusion and integration of Roma and Sinti, to facilitate inclusion and prevent discrimination, thereby laying firm and sound foundations for a successful and equal integration of Roma and Sinti. Target not only the Roma, but the whole population, so as to improve the situation of Roma and Sinti. Programmes and activities for integrating the Roma should not simply focus on the Roma themselves, but should focus on local communities, and therefore aim at improving living conditions and quality of life for all. The interventions by participants underscored the need for improved co-operation between the different programmes and initiatives (OSCE Action Plan, EU National Action Plans, programmes and projects of international organizations).