

GLZ Gender Competition 2022

Application from: CO Serbia

Who we are: Programme "Inclusion of Roma and other marginalized groups in Serbia" – InR (10/2018 until 03/2023)

Gender marker: G1

We are applying not as a single gender promotional activity but rather as a whole programme where all the measures and activities are mainstreamed, tending to become transformative. Enjoy your reading 😊.

1. Promoting gender equality

The programme "Inclusion of Roma and other marginalized groups in Serbia" (InR) is implemented in the Republic of Serbia. According to the BMZ reform concept, it is assigned to Action Field 1 "Good Governance" and the initiative topic "Perspective Home". It supports the implementation of the National Strategy for The Social Inclusion of Roma in Serbia 2016-2025 (hereinafter referred to as the "Roma Strategy"). The aim is to improve the implementation of the Roma strategy, i.e. the living conditions of Roma and returnees and other marginalised groups in the sense of general human, economic, social and cultural rights (ESC rights). Specifically, the programme contributes to the Agenda 2030 goals: SDG 1 (No poverty), SDG 5 (Gender equality), SDG 8 (Decent work and economic growth), SDG 10 (Reduced inequalities within and between countries), and SDG 16 (Peaceful and inclusive societies). It supports the EU accession process, in particular with regard to Chapters 23 (Justice and Fundamental Rights) and 19 (Employment and Social Affairs), and thus corresponds to the new BMZ concept on development cooperation with transformation partners.

By promoting employment and economic empowerment of Roma and other marginalized groups, e.g. returnees, persons with disabilities, women from rural communities etc., through different direct support services, the programme is very much contributing also to the core theme "Vocational Training and Sustainable Growth for Good Jobs".

Initial situation in the area of intervention: Roma are the largest minority in Europe. The number of Roma can only be estimated, because Roma often do not declare themselves as such or many do not have valid identity documents and are not registered. According to the last census in 2011, approximately 147,000 Roma live in Serbia. This corresponds to a population share of 2.1%. International organizations and civil society, however, assume that there are 450,000-500,000 Roma living in Serbia. Roma in Serbia are among the most vulnerable and marginalized population groups. They suffer discrimination and are exposed to a very high risk of poverty. They often do not have equal access to employment opportunities, live in informal settlements without infrastructure, lack access to education, especially to primary and secondary schooling, and have inadequate health care and insufficient access to social protection. In addition to structural disadvantages, the Roma minority is exposed to stereotypes and discrimination.

- 🚩 Only **28%** of Roma children enrol high school, and **61%** finish it, while 94% children from the general population enroll in secondary school and the completion rate is 98%.
- 🚩 **31,327** persons of Roma nationality are registered with the National Employment Service in the employment records, out of which **88.12%** are without qualifications.
- 🚩 A large number of Roma households in substandard Roma settlements have **no access to electricity, running water and sewage**.
- 🚩 Five of six Roma households (**83%**) lives in conditions of pronounced material deprivation while **84%** of Roma are social assistance beneficiaries.

Roma girls and women usually suffer multiple discrimination. They are exposed to patriarchal structures within their community and intimate partner violence, which hinder their equal access to education and employment, but also to health care and other social services. From early childhood, Roma girls are

overwhelmed by domestic work within a family and a household. Tradition of virginity testing, child, early and forced marriages are a serious encroachment on the human rights of Roma girls.

Because of this phenomenon, they drop out of school, give birth early, and the infant mortality rate is twice as high as the mortality rate in the general population. Their vulnerability to discrimination is increasing if they have one or more characteristics (additional to sex and ethnicity) that are grounds of discrimination, such as sexual orientation, age, illiteracy, pregnancy, maternity, financial status, language, etc.

As a result of the **COVID-19 pandemic**, services to meet basic needs in Serbia have become a lot more important. Employment, associated with job loss and loss of income, has decreased significantly compared to before the pandemic, especially for people with precarious jobs. Due to the loss of income and livelihoods, many Roma and other marginalized groups are under enormous psychological stress. Within families, the risk of gender-based violence against women and girls is increasing. At the same time, many Romani women are no longer in a position to pursue paid work due to the additional burden of increased unpaid care work (e.g., childcare, caring for sick family members).

The sustainable, social and economic **inclusion of the Roma minority** into Serbian society requires a cross-sectoral approach that defines clear and realistic goals and provides measures at the national and local level. While the Roma Strategy provides a good framework for this, it needs effective, efficient and sustainable structures and implementation mechanisms, so that improvements are achieved for the target group.

Using the **holistic approach** and “Leave No One Behind” principle, InR programme is largely contributing towards these goals. Working at both national and local level, gathering various stakeholders, bringing in innovative and participative solutions as well as gender transformative approach brought InR programme closer to reducing the gap between Roma and other marginalized groups and the majority population.

As a particularly important cross-cutting issue, it is observed in all fields of action how gender equality can be integrated through an appropriate conception of measures. Actors at national and local levels are being sensitized to gender-specific discrimination in order to be able to counteract it within the framework of measures and recommendations. The programme contributes to following the **‘Do-No-Harm’** approach with its inclusive strategy, by striking a balance between the promotion of the Roma minority and other marginalized groups on the one hand, and the perception of this support by the majority population on the other hand. InR programme is gender mainstreaming all activities, based on Gender Analysis and Gender Indicators set up for the project.

Measures are implemented by supporting variety of **tailored made** social inclusion measures, with emphasis on creating long term changes for the target group. With different employment promotion measures the programme is contributing to the reintegration of returnees but also to the improvement of the socio-economic position of the target group in general. The programme is closely cooperating on the local level with all relevant stakeholders from the public (local authorities), private and civil sector to create synergies and strengthening of mechanisms and local structures for social inclusion and reintegration. As for employment opportunities for Roma/returnees, direct cooperation with the private sector is established. Besides employment opportunities, InR programme is working on better planning of national and local policies, establishing mechanisms at both national and local level, antidiscrimination and support to

Europe, 21st Century?

Data from a survey conducted by UNICEF in 2019, indicate a huge difference in the presence of child marriage in the general population and Roma settlements - **56% of women in Roma settlements aged 20 to 24 married before the age of 18**, compared to 6% in the general population, while **16% were married before the age of 15**, as opposed to only 1% of those who opted for it in the general population.

overcoming COVID-19 pandemic. The programme follows an explicit gender mainstreaming approach by specially observing the **needs of girls and women**.

Highlights of achieved numbers:

- ❖ More than **800** persons have been employed or have increased their monthly income.
- ❖ More than **1,800** psycho-social and legal services as well as individual counselling and career guidance services have been provided to the beneficiaries.
- ❖ More than **1,400** persons have completed different training programs.
- ❖ More than **1,150** health care and social workers and teachers have participated in antidiscrimination trainings.
- ❖ More than **34,500** of hygiene and food packages have been distributed in 42 cities and municipalities to

Highlights of achieved results so far:

Support to the national campaign “Meet, don’t judge” (implemented by the Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Policy and Roma Women Network) where within the Month of Roma Women activism 30 CSOs and non-formal groups of Roma women organized 30 local actions for empowering of around 600 Roma women;

InR supported Commissionaire for the Protection of Equality (CPE) in conducting three surveys on discrimination in Serbia and both this and Protector of citizens will be partners in conducting series of capacity development trainings for CSOs on antidiscrimination and gender equality.

Together with the relevant ministries, series of trainings for health and social practitioners and educational staff on antidiscrimination and gender equality were held Serbia wide with more than 1150 participants.

National campaign with CSOs, local self-governments, Dutch Embassy and UNICEF for the prevention and eradication of child and forced marriages was launched on International Day on Elimination of Violence Against Women in 2021.

One of the examples, showing the success of the InR supported measures is a project with a Roma Women Center “Bibija” that won an European Commission prize for Serbia https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/system/files/2021-09/Roma_Awards_2021_winners.pdf

In 2020, GIZ Serbia launched Non-violence week and InR organized four workshops related to human rights, antidiscrimination, gender equality and Roma Inclusion for all GIZ Serbia national personnel. In 2021, InR programme participated in GIZ Diversity week.

2. Gender as a quality feature of our work

InR is using **demand driven approach** and all the measures are planned in accordance with the needs and in a participative manner. Due to our approach and results shown, many partnering ministries (such as main political partner - Ministry of Human and Minority Rights and Social Dialogue (MHMRSD)) and local self-governments are **asking for support** in policy advising.

The programme is supporting several policies and mechanisms by **introducing gender perspective and strengthening of women** (Coordination Body and Expert Group for monitoring the implementation of National Strategy for Inclusion of Roma men and women (Roma Strategy); Development of the M&E system for the monitoring of the implementation of the Roma Strategy on both national and local level which will be gender mainstreamed; Support in establishing of national Civil society platform; support in development of National strategy on Antidiscrimination, Support in development of National Strategy for Creating a Stimulating Environment for Civil Society Development); support in development of local policy documents regarding Roma and other marginalized groups.

Additionally, UNICEF approached InR and asked support in further defining of concept for **prevention and eradication of child and forced marriages** and concept was additionally elaborated and supported, together with the Dutch Embassy in the Republic of Serbia.

We are also recognized as an important partner contributing to gender promotion, thus the MHMRSD asked for support in implementation of a special women empowerment project “100 for future”, with the goal of **empowering of 100 Roma women for active citizenship** through the series of workshops to become community activists and participate in local and national discussions on policies that affect Roma women. The Ms. Minister Čović itself will take an active role in this project as a workshop mediator.

3. Gender and result-based monitoring

Contributions to enhancing gender equality and reducing gender-based discrimination and disadvantages is well documented in the project and the results in the area of gender equality are an integral part of the monitoring and evaluation system. InR programme developed comprehensive M&E system and mechanisms for measuring results are clearly documented and are clearly communicated with relevant stakeholders. Besides the standard way of documenting, we are additionally using the “**success stories**” approach in documenting and dissemination of results.

4. Cooperation

The programme pursues a cross-sectoral approach by focusing on the five fields of action (education, employment, housing, health and social protection) of the Roma Strategy promoting thus the inclusion of the Roma minority as a whole. The cooperation, exchange and flow of information at the **horizontal level** between the ministries and at the **vertical level** between the national and local levels are essential for the programme’s strategy. Relevant ministries, LSGs, institutions on national and local level, academia, private and civil sector are regularly partnering with InR.

Making greater use of **synergies** with international organisations and other international partners, communication and cooperation is regular, possible joint ventures are planned, but one of the most important cooperation is within the GIZ Serbia Country Office and within the Gender Network Serbia.

Even in the challenging situations, together with partners, we manage to overcome it. Baby sitting and work with children while moms are in trainings; securing safe and trustful environment for women and girls; allowing husbands, fathers, brothers and mothers in law to accompany and learn; mentorship, peer support etc. is our everyday work and we are proud to work for wellbeing of our fellow citizens. Saying that, **three success** factors for our programme are:

- **Equal Opportunity** – In all interventions and spheres the project activities are creating and maintaining equal opportunities for all individuals without any bias or discrimination. Standards for social equity and gender equality are introduced in all project activities.
- **Participation** – following the principle “Not for us without us”, InR programme is involving Roma and other marginalized groups in planning, implementation and monitoring of interventions.
- **Respect, Recognition and Sensitivity** – Due respect and recognition is given to all irrespective of gender, status or any other identity to ensure fair treatment at all times. Sensitivity towards positions, special needs, difficulties and marginalization due to socio cultural norms and practices is ensured through all phases of programme.