



Through the project:

**Promoting Human Rights and Inclusion
of Roma Women and Youth**

(European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights)

Author:

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EXAMPLES OF POSITIVE PRACTICES

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In the past 20 months, CARE International, in cooperation with the partner organizations "Strengthening – Zuralipe" from Vitez and "Romani Ćej – Roma Girl" from Prnjavor, implemented the project "Promoting Human Rights and Inclusion of Roma Women and Youth" financially supported through the European Union program, European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

In the spirit of the values promoted through the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), CARE International and partners have made great efforts at the local level to contribute to the fight against discrimination in all its forms and to promote the economic, cultural, and social rights of the Roma minority in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The project focused on supporting women and youth, a target group that is on the margins of ongoing also in Roma communities, respectively also representing the future of these communities, in case of youth.

The realization of the set goals was greatly contributed to by the true commitment of the partner organizations to the communities they represent, but also to their desire to learn, advance and promote common values.

The project has brought certain innovations and novelties, especially when it comes to target groups and communities. Our goal is to present the lessons learned and share good practices through this publication with those who can and want to apply them in their work.

We are proud that the project directly empowered over 50 young Roma men and women and over 50 women, and directly or indirectly improved communities and living conditions for over 5.000 Roma in Vitez, Travnik, Donji Vakuf, Prnjavor, Modriča and Vukosavlje.

We are grateful to the local communities for their support and participation in the project, as well as to the European Union, which financially supported the project "Promoting Human Rights and Inclusion of Roma Women and Youth".

Sumka Bučan, MSc

Director

CARE International Balkans

About the project:

The overall goal / impact of the Project "Promoting Human Rights and Inclusion of Roma Women and Youth" is capacity improvement of selected partner organizations, improvement of the position of Roma women and Roma youth activism in targeted municipalities, as well as establishment of instruments for participation in decision making. The project contributes to the fight against discrimination in all its forms and promotes the economic, cultural, and social rights of the Roma minority in Bosnia and Herzegovina, contributing to the protection of rights of women and children. The project addresses the rights and participation of particularly vulnerable groups, Roma women and Roma youth, and aims to work with them on building of their capacities and skills, to involve them in social, cultural and economic activities in the target municipalities.

Author's foreword:

The project "Promoting Human Rights and Inclusion of Roma Women and Youth" gathered more than 20 actors in 6 municipalities (Vitez, Travnik, Donji Vakuf, Prnjavor, Modriča and Vukosavlje), from non-governmental organizations, through young activists to local institutions. The project was implemented by CARE International in cooperation with the partner organizations "Strengthening – Zuralipe" from Vitez and "Romani Čej – Roma Girl" from Prnjavor, with the financial support of the European Union. During more than 20 months of implementation, the following results have been achieved:

- Two large workshops were organized that empowered more than 50 young Roma men and women, activists from 6 municipalities, through which they acquired skills and knowledge about activism, including planning and implementation of activist actions and initiatives;
- 10 workshops and trainings for Roma women were organized with participation of over 60 Roma women from 6 municipalities;
- Organized and implemented over 30 small initiatives; designed and implemented by young Roma activists (these initiatives involved more than 5.000 Roma men and women in communities);
- Organized and implemented over 20 economic empowerment initiatives for 20 Roma women and Roma families, for starting small-scale business, in 6 municipalities;



- The first two Roma youth business hubs in Vitez and Prnjavor have started operating, through which the following was organized:
 - 10 workshops and meetings for young Roma men and women (from CV writing education to activist initiative planning);
 - More than 20 field visits, interviews with Roma families and support in solving specific problems;
 - 5 specific educations (computer work, tailoring and sewing, clay creative work, decoupage).
- Two informal business units have been established:
 - In Vitez a facility is equipped with 10 sewing machines and in Prnjavor with a CNC machine (with funds from other donors in the amount of per 12.000 BAM);
 - In these business units per 3 specific trainings were organized;
 - For both business units, as part of education and support, a formal and professional business plan was developed for the development of further self-sustainability and work continuation.
- 6 small grants have been implemented:
 - Vitez: Grant for formal education of 10 Roma women for the profession of sewing and tailoring (5.000 Euros);
 - Travnik: Reconstruction of a residential building for a family of eight (2.500 Euros);
 - Donji Vakuf: Reconstruction of road infrastructure (2.500 Euros);
 - Prnjavor: Grant for formal education of 10 Roma men and women for work on a CNC engraving machine (5.000 Euros);
 - Modriča: Reconstruction of road infrastructure (2.500 Euros);
 - Vukosavlje: Reconstruction of road infrastructure (2.500 Euros).
- In these municipalities, per two public policies have been designed, on relations with the Roma non-governmental sector and the establishment of more efficient communication between local



institutions and Roma organizations, and institutional local action guidelines focused on Roma men and women.

All these results have been achieved thanks to the commitment and dedication of our partner organizations and the young Roma men and women involved in this project. During this joint work and the challenges of the COVID pandemic, we were forced to look for a different manner of implementation. Although numerous projects focused on the Roma population are being implemented in BiH, we have often been in a situation to talk about new "mechanisms", to open topics about new approaches. Implementing this project, we realized that during our work we conceived and designed the following examples of good practice or mechanisms that others, learning from our experience, can utilize in their work:

- ROMA YOUTH ACTIVISM: From networking, through education and empowerment, to planning and active participants for change in the local community;
- SUPPORT FOR WOMEN/ROMA WOMEN FROM MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES: From gathering, through education and motivation to the development of concrete business ideas and opportunities;
- COOPERATION WITH INSTITUTIONS AND INVOLVEMENT IN DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES: From gathering actors to joint creation of local strategies.

The ultimate goal of the implementation of each project is to create change. It makes us happy that by establishing various mechanisms and examples of positive action, we have contributed to changes for a better and more equal life of Roma men and women, not only in the municipalities where we worked, but throughout BiH.

Author:

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POSITIVE PRACTICE 1

ROMA YOUTH ACTIVISM

From networking, through education and empowerment, to planning and active participants for change in the local community

Youth empowerment is an important step in building the capacity of local Roma actors to get involved in creating positive change in their communities. During the field work, we witnessed that the following results were achieved through Roma youth activism:

- The capacities of young Roma men and women are being strengthened, their awareness is changing, which makes them more ready to build their own quality of life, but also to contribute to increasing the quality of life in their communities;
- Empowered young Roma men and women become positive role models in their communities and recognized "actors" and resources by local institutions and donors;
- Young Roma men and women implement various actions which contribute to the creation of positive changes, but also to the motivation of others to participate and be the bearers of change.

Although working with young people is a very layered topic with countless different approaches, we have defined the following important steps through the Project:

MOTIVATION, GATHERING AND IDENTIFICATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE AS A RESOURCE:

Experience to date has shown that it is not enough to work with young people through one-off actions, education or gatherings. The project "Promotion of Human Rights and Inclusion of Roma Women and Youth" involved young Roma activists in various ways throughout the implementation, thus creating and strengthening existing youth groups for action in communities with our partner organizations.



For young Roma men and women to become a recognizable resource in the local community, those working on their inclusion need to consider the following:

- In what way is your work with young people a matter of strategic approach, do you have a longer-term vision of capacity building of young Roma men and women in your NGO or institution?
- Do you have, or can you develop an approach, focus, way of acting that is constant, interesting, motivating or adapted to young people?
- Does your vision of working with young people have a final goal, in which way will young people be able to use everything they learn, find out?
- Do you have a vision of using the capacity of young Roma men and women you will build?

The lack of answers to these questions are the most common reasons why the activism of young Roma men and women ended after the completion of a project or action.

In order to motivate and gather young people, we have defined the following steps:

- Using the experience and capacity of organizations already working with young people (organizing focus groups or meetings with local organizations that know young Roma men and women best in their communities can bring many answers and eliminate many future problems);
- Organizing motivational meetings with young people in an environment that motivates young people, through travel, youth gatherings, meaningful socializing with young people, in the presence of other young people, positive examples, peers who will motivate others by their example;
- Creating a vision - these are motivating sessions that help young people who have not had experience with activism to develop interest and to see themselves as young activists in their communities;
- Connecting young people within their group, networking young people that we gather and motivate by using modern forms of communication, developing a spirit of mutual support within the groups of young people that we form and work with;
- Working with parents is also an important step, because it is necessary to build support capacities for young people participating in activism within Roma families, taking into account the challenges of life that Roma men and women live with.



CAPACITY BUILDING SUPPORT:

Capacity building of young Roma men and women is a necessary step in strengthening youth activism. We are aware that young Roma men and women in most cases live in marginalized communities and that attention needs to be paid to strengthening their capacities to participate in activism.

We organized capacity building through specially created workshops that had the following sessions, which we came to after analyzing the interests and motivation of young people, we adapted the agenda to their interests and needs:

- Motivational session: Why is it important to be an activist?
- What skills do we need to develop as an activist?
- How are community needs defined?
- Developing an activist idea?
- Steps in planning an activist initiative;
- Presentation and communication skills.

These topics were important to the young people we worked with and our experience shows that through this type of interactive and motivating education the gathered young people gained not only the necessary skills to organize actions and initiatives but also motivation and self-confidence.

CREATING ACTIONS IN THE COMMUNITY:

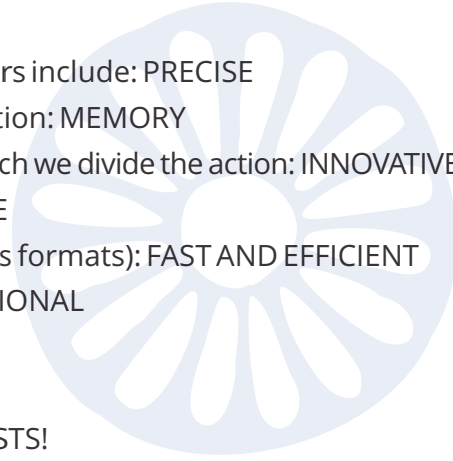
After capacities are built, the concrete implementation of the designed initiatives proved to be the biggest motivation for gathering young people. They could see and "feel" what it means to be an activist, they could rejoice in their successes, learn during the implementation of the initiative, but also face challenges and learn to address the obstacles they face.

During the implementation of the initiatives, the following matrix was used, i.e. the plan of activist action and planning that young people learned at the organized workshops:



BASIC ELEMENTS OF PLANNING A CAMPAIGN OR ACTIVIST ACTION!

1. Objectives – which problem is solved: CLEAR
2. Target audience/trends/attitudes – which users include: PRECISE
3. Message – which attitudes we change with action: MEMORY
4. Message transmitters/channels/formats in which we divide the action: INNOVATIVE/MOBILIZATION
5. Cooperation/partners: MORAL AND RELIABLE
6. Delivery/distribution method (not the same as formats): FAST AND EFFICIENT
7. MEDIA AND MEDIA PRESENTATION: PROFESSIONAL
8. Outdoor environment: ASSESSED
9. Action schedule/execution plan: PLANNED
10. Budget: PLANNED ACCORDING TO REAL COSTS!



The most important lesson learned: Working with and supporting young people needs to be continuous in order to recognize their importance, place and responsibility in the society and local communities in which they live.

POSITIVE PRACTICE 2

SUPPORT FOR WOMEN / ROMA WOMEN FROM MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES

From gatherings, through education and motivation to the development of concrete business ideas and opportunities

Working with Roma women in Roma communities is always a great challenge. Numerous studies show that Romani women are exposed to violence, even double discrimination, because they are Romani women and because they are women within their communities. The percentage of Roma women who own property is almost negligible, more than 80% of Roma women drop out of school or never go to school. Roma girls are exposed to serious problems of early marriage, which is often reduced to traditional customs. All these are the reasons why



the issue of empowerment, especially in the field of education and economic empowerment of Roma women, has become an important topic in many strategies of institutions and donors. Working with Roma women, we encountered several phases that required us to create different approaches:

- Motivation phase:

- In this phase it was necessary to do activities in the field, to enter Roma families and communities;
- The key role here was played by Roma NGOs who were able to do this demanding job due to the credibility they have had within the Roma population.
- Motivation was not only reflected in the creation of interest in education or opportunities offered by the Project, but also psychological support, "listening" to personal stories;
- We often skip this phase when planning our projects. We invite Roma women to one of the organized workshops and in the environment "outside" their families we talk about human rights, starting a business, etc., and often the "language" we speak to these women due to low education is incomprehensible, so the role of those living within the community, the activists, was key at this stage.
- It is not easy to act motivating in large Roma families, often without any means of subsistence and financial income, because stories about how, for example, it is possible to start a business, seem distant or impossible to Roma women. That is why it was important to have positive examples from the community, successful Roma women whose experiences were motivating during the first meetings and conversations.

- Support and empowerment phase:

Although many workshops, meetings and lectures have been held in Roma communities so far, we realized from the field that the changes are either negligible or very slow. Therefore, through the Project, we have developed some of the support models that have guided us and can be valuable guidelines in planning the following projects:



- It is often necessary to involve whole families in educational projects. During the education of Roma women, at the same time we organized activities for children, especially when it comes to children that mothers have nowhere to leave when they are at our workshops. In the programs of concrete economic support for starting small businesses, the support of the whole family played a key role, because in most cases, the economic empowerment of Roma women meant the empowerment of the whole family;
- The most ideal scenario of educational and economic support is the acquisition of specific skills and knowledge, preferably those that can be recognized in the formal system (tailoring course, hairdressing, etc.);
- Our project provided another advantage, for each type of education we could provide specific financial support for planning a "small business", in this way we were not talking about imaginary ideas but about specific opportunities, which in itself was extremely motivating;
- The training programs were based on the "step by step" principle on the example of making a business plan and included several key phases presented in a simple and understandable way:
 - Analysis of resources (which business can be started), what a Roma family has as a resource to start any business. These were motivating sessions based on the experience of other Roma men and women
 - Creating a production plan or developing a service or product
 - Potential market analysis
 - Promotion
 - Management – planning funds for further work.

Of course, these topics were covered in accordance with the existing resources, but the important factor was that most of the ideas could be financially supported. This alone was an extremely motivating factor for other women who did not initially want to get involved. Originally, we had about 20 interested women, after starting "small businesses" that interest was five times higher in all municipalities where we worked.

The most important lesson learned: The greatest value in this practice was the synergy of the education process in real circumstances and easy access and financial resources to support economic empowerment planned in the Project, which in itself created a successful positive story.



POSITIVE PRACTICES 3

COOPERATION WITH INSTITUTIONS AND INVOLVEMENT IN DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES

From gathering actors to jointly creating local strategies

Working with local institutions is extremely important not only in the form of support for projects and initiatives and processes, but also to create long-term results and change. The approach of CARE International and partners involved in the project "Promoting Human Rights and Inclusion of Roma Women and Youth" was reflected in two phases:

- Creating effective mechanisms for the inclusion of Roma men and women in decision-making processes through the formation of concrete local action groups;
- Creating joint local strategies and approaches.

The creation of effective mechanisms for the inclusion of Roma men and women in decision-making processes through the formation of concrete local action groups was done in several steps:

- Identification of actors in the local community:

- Municipality:
 - Delegated contact person by the mayor or mayor
 - Center for Social Work
 - School
 - Police
 - Employment offices
 - Representatives of cultural institutions
 - Other municipal bodies that can contribute to the realization of the identified community priorities



- Roma representatives:
 - Representatives of local Roma NGOs
 - Identified community activists
 - Other community members who want to become part of the Local Action Group

- **Defining roles and responsibilities.**

When it comes to institutions it is important to know:

- Their zones of actions/responsibilities
- Hierarchy within the institution – who makes what decisions
- Financial opportunities
- Situation in terms of manpower and other resources
- Will and motivation to act.

- **Creating joint strategies, action plans or initiatives and actions.**

The most important lesson learned: Participatory planning or the inclusion of Roma men and women in decision-making processes is not only a human right of any citizen, but also enables the achievement of more results and the creation of long-term changes. Working together to create public policies and local strategies makes these strategies and approaches “joint local ownership” and as such represents the interest of the whole community. Through joint work, it is possible to have an insight into real data on the situation in Roma communities and the created strategies will be more realistic, feasible and address real needs.





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Promoting Human Rights and Inclusion of Roma Women and Youth

In cooperation with partner organizations:



Romska djevojka - Romani ćej
Prnjavor



Jačanje - Zuralipe
Vitez

