



**Through Commitment, Dedication and Inspiration**

**“For Positive Changes  
and a Life of Equal  
Opportunities”**



**Project:  
FOR ACTIVE INCLUSION AND  
RIGHTS OF ROMA WOMEN  
IN THE WESTERN BALKANS  
(FAIR III)**



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## Introduction



**Sumka Bučan,**  
Regional Director  
CARE International Balkans

As a global actor with a vision of a world of hope, tolerance and social equality, a world in which poverty is eradicated and all people live in dignity, CARE International Balkans wanted to bring this vision to the Balkan region. Over three years, we built it through inclusion of Roma, Ashkali (RAE) and Egyptian women and girls, boys and men as allies in promoting and protecting human rights and gender equality among

Roma and Egyptian women and girls in Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Republic of Serbia and Montenegro.

The third and final phase of the FAIR III project - For Active Inclusion and Rights of Roma Women in the Western Balkans III - was dedicated to strengthening RAE communities, particularly women and girls, in order for them to better and more easily deal with harmful norms, inequalities and discrimination that they face on a daily basis in their families, communities and society as a whole. Removing systemic deficiencies and strengthening the capacity of members of RAE communities, as well as government officials dealing with minority groups and women's rights during their tenure, has resulted in over 100,000 direct and indirect Roma and Egyptian beneficiaries living in safer environments and having better access to rights and social services.

During the final phase of the project, special attention was paid to young Roma and Egyptians involved in activities aimed at helping communities. With the

help of tested educational models developed by CARE International Balkans over the last 15 years, they have built capacities to practise and promote equal, healthy and non-violent lifestyles in their environments and society as a whole. (For more information, visit <https://youngmeninitiative.net>).

Through the strengthening of Roma civil society organisations (CSOs) and existing participatory accountability mechanisms in the community, the project continued activities aimed at improving access to and provision of services for Roma and Egyptian women and girls, particularly in the areas of sexual, reproductive and maternal health, gender-based violence, and education. Using CARE's existing methods and tools, such as Social Analysis and Action and Community Score Card (CSC), we engaged all relevant actors in the process to improve communication and understanding of the issues that affect everyone, from all aspects and perspectives, and jointly come to a solution to be implemented.

By supporting the activities of the regional Balkan Roma Women's

Network in regard to the 2020 EU Roma Integration Agenda, the FAIR III project aimed to increase the influence of CSOs and strengthen regional cooperation among the three national Roma women's networks. Roma and Egyptian women and girls, as well as CSOs and networks, have joined or established their participation in regional and global social movements that promote and advocate for gender equality, women's and minority rights.

After three years of implementation, we are proud of the work done and grateful to all participants who contributed to the successful implementation of the project. We would like to express our deepest appreciation to the partner organisations that served the communities during the COVID-19 pandemic and actively engaged in the programs implemented by CARE International Balkans to combat the pandemic's repercussions.



## For Active Inclusion and Rights of Roma Women in the Western Balkans – FAIR III

### Project Description

The project aimed to empower Roma and Egyptian women and girls to be free and able to exercise their rights to a healthy, dignified life free from violence, inequality and discrimination with the support of their partners, families and communities. The Project was realised through 4 results:

**Result 1:** Enhanced capacities of Roma civil society organisations, youth and key community actors to practice and promote gender equitable, healthy and non-violent lifestyle with help of tested models and approaches. Through three sub-grants, representatives of local youth Roma organisations and CARE partners from three target countries implemented CARE's tested life skills education program in RE communities with the help of Young

Men Initiative (YMI) partners, involving over 600 young people.

**Result 2:** Improved access to and provision of services for Roma and Egyptian women and girls (in particular on sexual, reproductive and maternal health, gender-based violence and education) is ensured through strengthening the capacity of Roma civil society organisations and the existing participatory accountability community mechanisms (local multisectoral working groups). Five sub-grants were used to facilitate cooperation with 50 representatives of institutions and decision-makers. Through improved communication and cooperation, 500 community members and six mediators were engaged to assist at least 1,500 people with their most pressing life needs.

**Result 3:** Three national level Roma women's networks have been enabled/or were enabled to be active and contribute to the efficient functioning of the regional Balkan Roma and Egyptian Women's Network, as well as their increased efforts toward the post-2020 EU Roma Integration Agenda. The project engaged three Roma women to support the work of national networks, and to communicate with representatives of the Balkan

Roma Women's Network, in order to advocate for and make visible the Roma agenda, gender sensitive budgeting and budget allocation for Roma women through improved cooperation and planning, as well as data collection. Collected and analysed evidence served as the foundation for joint campaigning, lobbying and advocacy efforts.

**Result 4:** Roma and Egyptian women and girls, as well as representatives of civil society organisations and Networks, became part of the regional and global social movement initiatives promoting and advocating for gender equality, women's and minority rights. This result enabled the Balkan Roma Women's Network to become more systematically involved in global social movements at the regional and European level.

**The total budget of the project is EUR 1.1 million:** 1,000,000.00 was provided by the Austrian Development Cooperation (ADC) and 100,000.00 by the Czech Development Agency.

**Location:** Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Republic of Serbia, Montenegro

**Partner organisations:** Roma organisations from Bosnia and Herzegovina, the Republic of Serbia and Montenegro

**Donor(s):** Austrian Development Agency and Czech Development Agency

**Duration:** 38 months (February 1, 2019 - March 31, 2022)





## Life stories told throughout the project:

Gathering the results of a project that began, grew, lasted and developed over 9 years in different phases (FAIR I, FAIR II and FAIR III) into a single short publication, is not an easy task. Behind the accomplishments we witness and portray in our publication are a variety of life stories. As a result of this experience, both colleagues from partner organisations and the FAIR III team learned and grew professionally and personally. It was an honour to see colleagues from partner organisations start or finish their education, master and acquire new skills and knowledge during implementation, develop new social contacts, become respected and recognisable in their communities

and with representatives of institutions with whom they collaborated. What began as a vision nine years ago has now become a reality.

Other life stories are those of beneficiaries who have benefited from a variety of actions and interventions in communities. These are the changes that we wish to present in this publication. The ultimate goal of every project is to bring about change, but for everyone involved, this journey has become much more than just a project. Numerous changes have been recognised and recorded in the lives of many FAIR III project beneficiaries. Rights have been exercised, various social services have been provided, valuable support has been given to vulnerable categories of beneficiaries within communities through the work of mediators to raise awareness of their numerous problems, and hundreds of actions and initiatives have been





launched to address them. Members of RE communities, including women and youth, became visible, and their needs and voices were heard through numerous campaigns and initiatives. That meant not only a better but also a more dignified life for them.

The life stories of the CARE International Balkans project team, realised by the FAIR III team of Jadranka Miličević, project manager and Maja Petek, project coordinator, signified commitment, dedication and continuous support to all actors involved in project implementation. This frequently entailed solving numerous organisational and personal problems of the actors involved in the project. For the project team, this was more than a project; it was life, which had suddenly become life in three countries, living in over 10 Balkan cities.

*Ševko Bajić*

*Communication officer CARE International*



### **The project was implemented:**

- in 3 countries Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), the Republic of Serbia and Montenegro
- with capacity building and partnership with
- 6 civil society organisations

### **BiH:**

- Citizens' Association for the Promotion of Roma Education "Otaharin" Bijeljina
- Roma Women's Association "Better Future" of the City of Tuzla

### **Montenegro:**

- Centre for Roma Initiatives Nikšić

### **Republic of Serbia:**

- Citizens' Association "Romani cikna" Kruševac
- Roma Women's Centre Veliki Crljeni
- Association of Roma Women Osvit Niš
- with about 16,000 direct participants
- and about 90,000 indirect participants
- with over 4,500 interventions
- in cooperation with 785 representatives from 245 relevant institutions



These are just some of the results that the CARE International Balkans team is particularly proud of.

This project was implemented thanks to the dedicated work of partner organisation representatives, persons engaged through the project, representatives of civil society and institutions open to collaboration. We would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who was involved in the project; however, because the list of

individual institutions would be too long, we will only list the relevant institutions that were involved at the local level: social work centres, police, municipal authorities and administration, various councils and bodies dealing with Roma or gender equality issues, community health centres and mental health centres, women's health clinics, schools and school administrations, kindergartens, relevant ministries and others.

Through the project the Roma partner organizations and Roma womans networks have been supported, holding workshops, providing technical assistance, organisational interventions, holding campaigns, drafting advocacy documents, hiring network coordinators, skill-building and supporting networks, and establishing the Balkan Roma Women's Network. Furthermore, only through grants for direct activities in the communities, partner organisations were awarded EUR 510,000.00 (almost 50% of the total project value) through 20 grants.

- Grants over a period of 30 months:
  - 3 x 43,200.00 EUR Youth grants
  - 5 x 63,000.00 EUR Grants for direct community work
  - 3 x 18,000.00 EUR Grants to support the work of national women coordinators
- 6 grants in the amount of around 1,100.00 EUR each for campaigns over a period of a few months (16 Days of Activism, Month of Roma Women's Activism)
- 3 grants in the amount of 1,500.00 EUR each for the preparation of Policy paper, over a period of a few months

## About project accomplishments:

Through the first expected result, partner organisations in Bijeljina, Niš and Nikšić have connected with youth organisations, long-term partners on the CARE project the [Young Men Initiative](https://youngmeninitiative.net/en/about-us/working-withyouth/) (YMI) [https://youngmeninitiative.net/](https://youngmeninitiative.net/en/about-us/working-withyouth/)

[en/about-us/working-withyouth/](https://youngmeninitiative.net/en/about-us/working-withyouth/). The YMI methodology, which has been recognised and accepted by experts and ministries of youth education across the region, has been implemented in city Bijeljina, Niš and Nikšić.

*Changing young people's lifestyles and behaviour through peer education!*

*Peer educators become recognised leaders in their communities  
...they become empowered young people...*

Peer  
education



educated young people get to know their peers through workshops on selected topics



- through play
- socialising
- free and voluntary expression of young people's opinions

3 partner organisations:

- **BiH:** Citizens' Association for the Promotion of Roma Education "Otaharin" Bijeljina;
- **Montenegro:** Centre for Roma Initiatives Nikšić;
- **Republic of Serbia:** Association of Roma Women Osvit Niš



From Program Y, partner organisations selected the 12 most important topics for their local communities:

- What do we call gender? (What is sex and what is gender? Do we know?)
- What do I want to do with my life? (I dream about my future, and if I dream, then I can make it happen!)
- A living fool or a dead hero (topic of masculine honour)
- Labelling (how many times have we been labelled? And how many of us, knowingly or unknowingly, have labelled others?)
- Dating scenes (recognise jealousy, relationship violence, control and “Run, Lola, run!”)
- Aggressive, passive and assertive (How do we behave? Let’s be more aware of our behaviour and replace it with more useful behaviour)
- When do I take a risk? (ignorance, lack of education, living in a closed community, unawareness, and fear are all factors that contribute to risky behaviour)
- What is violence? (but really “what is violence”?)
- Alcohol and alcoholism (legal opiates, starts with fun and relaxation and then leads to addiction)
- What are drugs (how harmful are they to our body, mind, emotions and loved ones?)
- Men as guardians (let’s look at roles within the family).





9 secondary and  
3 primary schools



12 Roma and Egyptian  
communities in  
Visoko, Bijeljina, Niš,  
Aleksinac, Nikšić,  
Podgorica and Berane



30 peer educators  
(50% girls, 53%  
young people from RE  
communities)



347 workshops carried  
out for over 1,000  
boys and girls (59%  
girls/38% young Roma  
and Egyptians)



Program Y was  
attended by 22 adults  
representing RE  
communities and  
associations, and 10  
school representatives.

Today, these school representatives continue to hold Y-program workshops and use their advanced skills to teach children in the education system on a daily basis.

25,000 people participated in 18 regional campaigns held during the project.







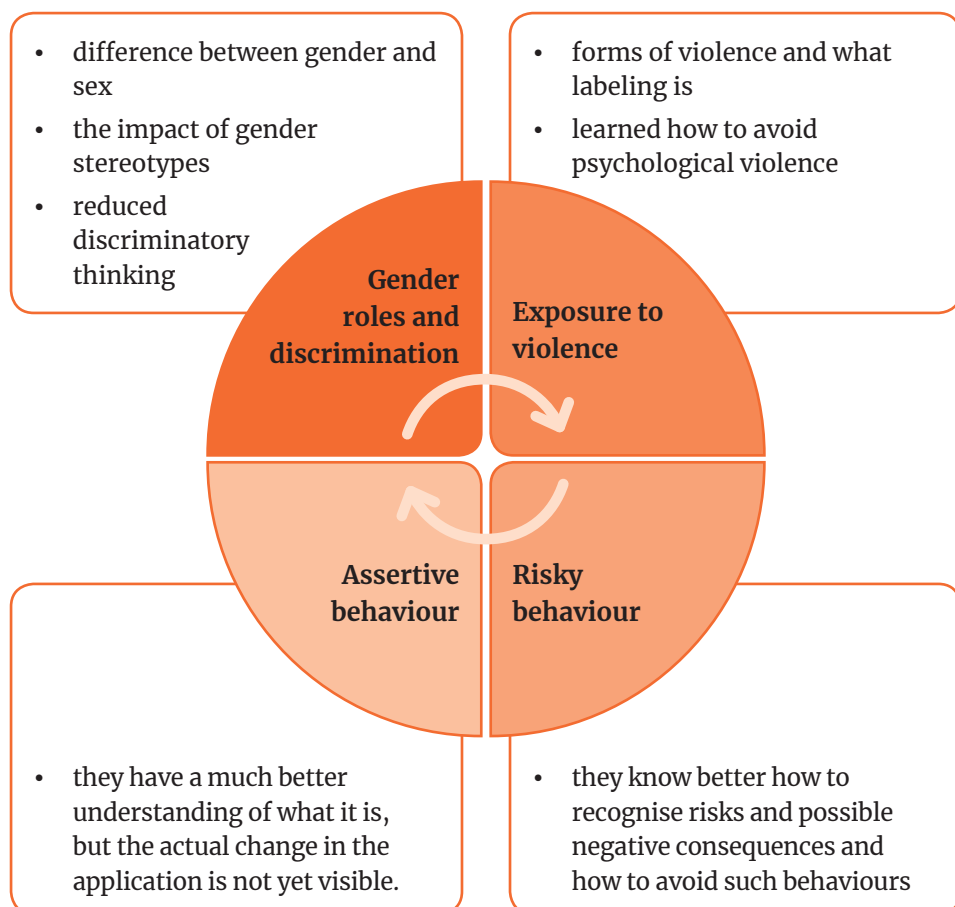
Four youth camps were held to further empower peer educators and “polish” leadership skills, communication skills, encourage personal development, problem solving, workshop skills and public advocacy.



The youth organisation “CRNO” (Centre for the Development of Non-Formal Education [www.crno.org](http://www.crno.org)) was founded in Visoko as result of the project ... and says:

*“ČIĆA MIĆA NEK POČNE PRIČA  
(LET THE STORY BEGIN)  
We create opportunities...  
Use them!”*

By evaluating and comparing results, opinions, attitudes, and knowledge at the start and end of the project on a sample of 650 young men and women, it was discovered that young people better understand:





## Communication is the key to joint problem solving

The work of five partner organisations in their communities to improve the quality of service provision or access to the services, by connecting service providers and users, is the most significant change related to the project's expected second goal. CARE's existing methods and tools were used to achieve better communication, perception change, and joint solution finding. These methods and tools

included [Social Analysis and Action and Community Score Card](#) (CSC). / *"Community Needs Assessment (Followed by Action) Using the Scoring Method"*: an approach that involves both service providers and users in assessing the quality of services provided/received against clearly defined performance indicators, monitoring, planning activities and repeating processes. These methods have been utilised to improve access to services in the fields of education, health, violence prevention, arranged child/underage marriages and social protection.



5 partner organisations:

**BiH:**

- Citizens' Association for the Promotion of Roma Education "Otaharin" Bijeljina;
- Roma Women's Association "Better Future" of the City of Tuzla;

**Montenegro:**

- Centre for Roma Initiatives Nikšić;

**Republic of Serbia:**

- Citizens' Association "Romani cikna" Kruševac;
- Roma Women's Centre Veliki Crljeni.

These organisations have developed and implemented 26 CSC Mini Action Plans in the aforementioned fields.

We singled out a few illustrative results from each field among the numerous achieved using the CSC method:

**Education**

30 m of streets were asphalted with the financial assistance of the municipality of Nikšić (Montenegro). The settlement of Trebjesa is illuminated with 40 street light poles, which *increases the safety* of community members, particularly children when returning from school in the evening (unplanned project result).

In addition to other positive measures introduced to reduce discrimination, the school action plans in five primary schools in Kruševac (Republic of Serbia) included a decision to involve representatives of Roma parents in the work of the School Board, which **increases the participation** of RE parents.

**Support for the education of Roma children:** The Municipality of Lukavac has allocated budget funds for school books and supplies for 60 Roma children (60% boys and 40% girls), while the Municipality of Vukosavlje has provided free school transport for students from the Roma community Modrički lug.



## Healthcare

By establishing “*Health on Wheels*” through the visits of medical teams from the community health centres Lazarevac and Lajkovac, the *health and self-care* of members of the Roma communities of Lajkovac, Dubrava and Palestina *have improved*.

Members of the Roma communities of Dubrava and Crna Međa *have better access to health and other services* through introducing a daily and more frequent bus line (Dubrava - Lajkovac route) and

opening a new bus stop 60m (formerly 2km away) from the newly built Roma community of Crna Međa.

As the method’s purpose is for communities to represent their rights and reach a joint solution in cooperation with local authorities, *the example in Dubrava stands out, as community members in cooperation with municipal authorities independently initiated and agreed on asphaltting 2 kilometres of road to their community.*

## Prevention of (partner) violence and arranged underage/child marriages

Having recognised a problem in the lack of field work or inadequate police response to reports of violence, members of the RE communities in Podgorica and Berane in Montenegro improved response mechanisms to prevent domestic violence and child/underage arranged marriages through the accredited program “Training of Professional Workers, Professional Associates for the Prevention and Suppression of Arranged Child Marriages”. This was accomplished by educating police personnel on the most common police failures in dealing with these cases, as well as familiarising them with the “Protocol on Protection in Cases of Domestic Violence with a Focus on the RE Community and the Effects of Arranged Child Marriages”. The significance is reflected in the transfer of good practices to other locations, so that the established model of cooperation between the partner organisation in Montenegro and the Police Administration – Security Centre Nikšić – has been expanded to the Police Administration – Security Centre Berane – whose employee conducts trainings on this topic within the institution. *Such allies play an im-*



*portant role in raising awareness as agents of change and are crucial to institutional transformation.*

According to the partner organisation representatives, the method “Community Needs Assessment (Followed by Action) Using the Scoring Method” (CSC) proved to be very effective because:

- A sense of ownership is felt as a result of the method and joint development of mini action plans, and better mutual cooperation as well as active participation of individuals in the entire process is noticed.
- The method leaves a written trace that allows for monitoring of the work, indicating that the method is systematised.
- The method helps focus on solving specific problems.
- The method proved to be very useful for the community!



## Work of community mediators

To strengthen the RE communities, the project established and supported the work of mediators for over two years, who provided members of these communities with access to rights through direct assistance. The assistance was most often provided in the fields of health, education, social protection, obtaining personal and other documentation, and preventing domestic violence and arranged child/underage marriages.

Importantly, the mediators were recognised and acknowledged by the community, representatives of institutions and other international and local organisations, allowing them to participate in numerous humanitarian actions, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Many requests were written on the street, many institutions were

visited to advocate for the rights of the disenfranchised, many trials were completed, many people were heard, and many pieces of advice were offered.... Often, what began as resolving a single request would require additional services to complete the process; for example, a person wants to get an ID card but does not have a birth certificate and was born in another country in the region. As a result of this or even more challenging cases, the project resulted in regional cooperation of mediators, allowing for easier and faster resolution of such cases.

As a result of the recognition of the role and work of the mediator by the local government of Tuzla (BiH), the project mediator was offered a space in the municipality to continue providing service to the Roma community.





3 countries  
19 municipalities



87 Roma and  
Egyptian  
communities



9 mediators



over 4,300 services



for 2,600 persons,  
of which 55% are  
women



recognised and  
acknowledged by  
the representatives  
of RE communities,  
institutions and  
other organisations







## Statements of mediators and volunteers

### Education

*Many of these young people did not go to school, and thanks to us, not only did they start attending school on a regular basis, but they also acquired other skills that they will need later in life.*

### Healthcare

*We taught young people all the skills that will help them develop healthy lifestyles.*

*Thanks to our activities, we were able to provide numerous medical examinations for women in our communities. More than two-thirds of the more than 200 women were required to continue treatment. They would not have known they had a problem if it hadn't been for our involvement. Furthermore, we now have a far bigger number of women in Roma communities who are aware of the importance of prevention.*

### Violence

*When it comes to violence, the most important thing for us was to engage with young people, to train them through numerous workshops not only to recognise violence and peer violence, particularly gender-based violence, but also to be active participants in the fight against all forms of violence.*

### Arranged child/ underage marriages

*We were aware of the problem of arranged child marriages, but it was not until we entered our communities that we realised how serious it is. Thanks to our work, we have raised the awareness in our communities that this is not a tradition and that we should all get involved in the fight against arranged child marriages.*



## Roma women's networks

For many years, Roma women's organisations in their countries have gathered to meet the needs of joint representation and action through networks: Roma Women's Network "Success" (BiH), RAE Women's Network "FIRST" (Montenegro) and Roma Women's Network of the Republic of Serbia. The project's goal was to support and improve their work, as well as to build regional networking.

To support the improvement work, the project invested funds in developing the necessary skills the members, and through the employment and active work of national network coordinators, improved cooperation and coordination within networks,



## 16 Days of Activism Against Violence Against Women (November 25 – December 10, 2020)



improved regional cooperation and exchange, and increased visibility and representation.

Members of the networks often collaborate and tend to gather around campaigns in which they actively work to raise the visibility of certain problems concerning Roma and Egyptian women and girls. Throughout the FAIR III project, the project supported partner organisations and 3 national networks in holding campaigns around key dates. The campaigns reached 64,000 people.





**Month of Roma Women's Activism (March 8 - April 8, 2021)**



**International Roma Genocide Remembrance Day (August 2, 2021)**



In order to jointly represent the rights of Roma women, the project has supported the establishment of an informal network known as **Balkan Roma Women's Network**



**It has over  
60 active  
members**



From **seven countries**  
(BiH, Republic of Serbia,  
Montenegro, North Macedonia,  
Kosovo, Republic of Croatia,  
Albania).

The Balkan Roma Women's Network enabled partners to connect and collaborate on fundraising activities apart from CARE. As an example, the partners from Montenegro and Republic of Serbia developed and applied jointly for a project on prevention of child marriage.

**Balkan Roma Women's Network encourages and develops regional cooperation!**



*Statements by members of the informal Balkan Roma Women's Network...*

*Thanks to the informal Balkan Roma Women's Network, we can unite, learn from one another, and start joint campaigns and initiatives...*

*The network has contributed to increasing the visibility of Roma community problems that are universal in all countries...*

*Thanks to the Network, we have been able to participate in a number of processes of developing national and regional policies and documents, which for us signifies a larger degree of Roma women's participation in decision-making processes.*





## Conferences

Two thematic conferences have offered the space for interconnection, allowing transference of good models, a collaborative context analysis and joint conclusions:



The conference ***“Forgotten Communities: Roma Men and Women During the COVID-19 Pandemic”*** held in Belgrade (Republic of Serbia) in May 2021 allowed for the exchange of experiences on addressing the needs of the Roma community during the COVID-19 outbreak. Among 43 participants, there were 13 government representatives, 26 representatives of Roma women’s organisations and networks, and 4 representatives of international organisations.







The conference *“Healthy Lifestyles Through Gender Equality”* held in Bijeljina (BiH) in November 2021 brought together 19 participants, including 7 representatives of institutions, 6 active young peer educators and 6 representatives of partner organisations. During the conference, the participants had the opportunity to hear directly from young people about the importance of peer education and their experience, while representatives of institutions shared their positive experiences with this method of knowledge transfer and the importance of topics for young people improving their life skills.





## Publications, videos, promotional materials....

### Advocacy documents:

- *“Uticaj i posljedice pandemije COVID-19 na romske zajednice u BiH”* (*“Impact and Consequences of COVID-19 Pandemic on Roma Communities in BiH”*) developed by the Roma Women’s Association “Better Future” of the City of Tuzla in cooperation with the Roma Women’s Network “Success”, <https://zrm-uspjeh.ba/index.php/en/documents>
- *“Analiza - Uključenost, trendovi i politike zapošljavanja Romkinja u Republici Srbiji”* (*“Analysis - Inclusion, Trends and Employment Policies of Roma Women in the Republic of Serbia”*) prepared by the Citizens’ Association “Romani cikna” in cooperation with the Roma Women’s Network of the Republic of Serbia
- Case study *“Jednak pristup prema Romkinjama i Egipćankama u primjeni javnih politika”* (*“Equal Access to Roma and Egyptian Women in the Implementation of Public Policies”*) of the Centre for Roma Initiatives from Montenegro prepared in cooperation with the

RAE Women’s Network “FIRST”,  
<https://crink.me/studija-slucaja>

### Videos:

- CRI Campaign *“Ne podržavaj nasilje”* (*“Do Not Support Violence”*), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=It6kTh2X-fg>
- CRI Campaign *“Ne vrijeđaj mene nego promijeni sebe”* (*Do Not Insult Me, but Rather Change Yourself”*), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WdyWIa8XcOc>
- CRI Performance *“Nijesam kriv/a”* (*“I’m Not Guilty”*) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Teros5vE1Tc>
- Women’s Roma Center Veliki Crljani *“Ujedinjene za bolje sutra”* (*United for a better tomorrow*) <https://youtu.be/rj2Aqe-RyE4>
- UR OSVIT <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EE5ARQmop5Q&t=328s>
- OTAHARIN *“Zapali aktivizam V”* (*“Set the Activism on Fire V”*) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2LYB4wMQNnc&t=613s>




## **Publications:**

- CRI “Žena sa 10 života - Ispovjesti Romkinja i Egipćanki” (A Woman with 10 Lives - Confessions of Roma and Egyptian Women)
- OSVIT “Osnažene/i menjamo loše navike i gradimo bolje društvo – FAIR III za mlade” (“Empowered to Change Bad Habits and Build a Better Society - FAIR III for Young People”)
- Romani Cikna Informants:
  - “Upoznaj žensko zdravlje, planiraj vlastiti život”.  
(“Learn About Women’s Health, Plan Your Own Life”)
  - “Što se više zna to se više može”.  
(“The More You Know, the More You Can”)
  - “Nasilje nad ženama”.  
(“Violence against Women”)
  - “Zaustavimo dečje brakove”.  
(“Let’s End Child Marriages”)

Promotional materials were made and distributed during the three-year project:

Leaflets/flyers and brochures were distributed during the campaign “Month of Roma Women’s Activism” and “16 Days of Activism against Violence against Women” (street actions, meetings with representatives of institutions, in Roma communities, home visits...)

Hundreds of calendars, T-shirts, planners, pens, bags, and umbrellas were made and distributed....





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