

Decade of the Roma

ROMA GROUPS

Focus Groups Discussion

MACEDONIA

June, 2005

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

- **Most of the Roma only listed the daily problems faced by the Roma population and couldn't give their opinion about the direction in which the country goes. Looking from the perspective of unemployment and poverty, the majority of the Roma believed that the country stagnates or moves not in positive direction.**
- **The bad political and economical circumstances were identified as the key reasons for the unemployment and the poverty of all citizens, including the Roma. Underestimation of the Roma, according to a large number of the participants, could be considered additional factor for the bad situation in which the Roma population finds itself. Only the male Roma citizens were more familiar with the ongoing social activities and Euro-Atlantic processes that would inevitably bring positive changes in solving the Roma problems related to the employment.**
- **According to the largest number of the female Roma citizens, being Roma means to be poor, unemployed and underestimated by the rest of the citizens in the country. These feelings were shared by the male Roma citizens, who added that they are still proud to be Roma.**
- **Poverty, unemployment and rejection by the society were pointed as the biggest problems faced by the Roma in Macedonia. Smaller number of the citizens mentioned also the living conditions in the Roma settlements. The lack of education was elaborated more by the male Roma citizens.**
- **It is interesting to point that, apart of the poverty, which was indicated as key problem, underestimation was also among the first answers to the question 'Which are the biggest problems faced by the Roma', of a large number of the interviewed Roma.**
- **It is especially important to point to a part of the educated female Roma citizens from Skopje, who were convinced that the blame for the situation in which the Roma population is, partly lies in the low social activity of the Roma in Macedonia in direction of execution of its rights.**
- **Taking in consideration that the most usual interaction between the Roma and the rest of the non Roma population is in the institutions, mainly the health centers, social care offices, schools and the public administration, large part of the opinion over the attitude of the non Roma citizens toward them, is built on the contacts at the office counters and the rest of the interaction modules with the employees in these institutions.**

- **If the opinions of the Roma are taken in consideration, it may be concluded that, in the abovementioned institutions the Roma are not treated equally as the rest of the population. According to the majority of the Roma citizens, they face underestimation, not only on the behalf of the employees in the institutions, but also by the rest of the citizens present there.**
- **The citizens from different cities had different experiences regarding the acceptance of the Roma on individual level. The Roma citizens from Prilep and Stip pointed that, besides the common prejudices and the underestimation that the Roma face, they are well accepted on individual level, by the people that they have daily contacts with.**
- **Contrary to them, the Roma citizens from Skopje, where, apart of the dominant Macedonian population, there's also a large Albanian community, stressed the rejective and especially hard intolerant attitude that the Albanian population perform toward the Roma.**
- **The Roma from Prilep stated the fact that their community consists of "old settlers", citizens of Prilep of Roma ethnicity, and "newcomers", nomad Roma that settled in the city in the last years, which, beside the high level of integration into roman community, still provoke incidents, mostly inside the Roma community.**
- **According to the opinion of the interviewed citizens, poverty, compared to the other ethnic communities, is worst among the Roma, even though it affects everybody in Macedonia. This is due to the lack of education, but also because of the principles of employment in Macedonia, which are based on friendships and contacts with man on power, criteria according which the Roma don't stand a chance due to their absence from important social positions.**
- **According to the observations of the Roma citizens, there isn't any positive, unemployment related, trend in the country during the recent years. Yet, most of the citizens expressed hopes for better future for the coming generations. These hopes were built on the fact that level of education of the young Roma increased significantly.**
- **Except the increase of level of education, which should improve the employment opportunities, several young and educated female Roma citizens from Skopje said that the decrease of the number of children in the family would contribute to smaller life expenses and improvement of life, attitude which was not shared by most of the senior women.**
- a. **Most of the Roma in Macedonia felt the name 'Gypsies' insulting. According to their opinion, and taking in consideration the inherited stereotype of the Roma population, it carries only negative**

connotation. For the same reason, the Roma citizens believed that the use of that name immediately puts them in a subordinated position.

- b. The majority of the Roma population considered the Macedonian people tolerant in general. Referring to the issue of integration in the society, most of the Roma stressed that individually they are well accepted by the Macedonians with which they interact daily, yet still, with a certain dose of lower appreciation.**
- c. In the relations with citizens with which they don't have regular contacts and which they don't know personally, according to the statements of the citizens, Roma face underestimation stemming from the common picture of the Roma as people of lower value.**
 - According to the most of the Roma citizens, the integration of the Roma in the society is increased during the recent years. The male participants from Prilep stressed that the presence of Roma children in the schools has also significantly increased during the last few years, and the female Roma citizens from Stip stressed that even the Macedonians tend to use the name 'Roma', instead of 'Gypsies', more and more often.**
 - All Roma citizens, regardless of their gender, age and place of residence, believed that it would be better if the relations between the Roma and non Roma intensified. This would contribute to the broader opportunities for prosperity of the young generations of Roma and to the improved appreciation of the Roma in general.**
 - Regarding the larger integration in the society, the Roma didn't see any obstacles coming from the Government or the institutions of the system, but they placed the problems in the underestimations from the other, non Roma, population. The prejudices that the non Roma population have against them, according to the Roma citizens, are built on the bad personal experiences that some of the citizens have with Roma, and those experiences, sometimes unnecessarily, confirm the stereotype about the Roma.**
 - Large number of Roma from Skopje, where next to the Macedonians there are also large minority groups of Albanians and Turkish, stressed that larger integration is needed not only among the Macedonians, but also among the Turkish and the Albanians, by whom they are accepted least.**
 - Most of the Roma citizens didn't believe that segregation of the Roma is necessary measure for improvement of the life of Roma. They once again repeated their strong wish for integration and affirmation among all people in the society, investing by that in the future of their generations.**

- **It should be mentioned that the idea for segregation of Roma was rejected by the majority of Roma citizens, even though a part of the female Roma citizens from Stip articulated the opinion that living separately might have a positive impact on the self awareness of the Roma community, offering the opportunity to feel its one authenticity.**
- d. Most of the Roma believed that the authorities e.g. the political parties on power always took the Roma only as potential votes. Regardless of which part of the country they were coming from, the Roma said that their communication with the political structures is only during the pre election period.**
- **The usual address to which most of the request, for solutions of the existential problems, the Roma sent to was the Government, taking in consideration that it is a responsibility of the Government to deal with the poverty by opening new jobs and distributing social aid.**
- **Regardless of the different expectations from the Macedonian Government, all Roma citizens thought that the situation in which the country finds itself is extremely hard, and therefore not always can the Government deal with the problems, not only of the Roma, but of the other citizens in the country too. Thus, none of the Roma citizens believed that it was Government or system policy of discrimination against the Roma.**
- **Even though the Roma citizens frequently repeated that the Roma are the most economically endangered category in the state, none of the expressed an opinion that Roma should be helped more than other poor people in the country.**
- **If they had the chance to talk to the Prime Minister of the Government, biggest part of the Roma citizens would ask for assistance in solving their employment status.**
- **All Roma citizens expressed bitter dissatisfaction from the activities of the local authorities, and pointed to sewage, garbage disposal, water supply and streets condition as the main unsolved problems in the settlements where Roma live. Regarding the responsibilities of the local authorities and the problems it should deal with, male citizens presented more insight than the female citizens.**
- **The male and the female population were clearly divided over the opinions about the activities that should be undertaken by the Roma community in direction of improving the life quality and solving the problems that the Roma face. The largest part of the female population believed that the Roma community can't do much by itself and that help is to come only 'from outside'. Contrary to them, the male citizens clearly pointed to the role of the Roma community in the education of**

young generations, mainly in direction of enforced process of education.

- **It should be stressed that the disagreements in the Roma communities, which were emphasized by almost all Roma citizens, regardless of the place of residence, only contribute to the opinion that the Roma communities are incapable to organize themselves more seriously in order to solve their own problems.**
- **Besides their participation in the structures of the local self government, none of the Roma expressed positive opinion about the success of the Roma representatives in their efforts to solve the problems in the settlements where Roma live.**
- **Only the female Roma citizens from Stip were aware of the national efforts to improve the life of Roma. Surprisingly, they gave the example of building cabins for the Roma families in Skopje, something which was not mentioned by the interviewed group from Skopje.**
- **Most of the Roma citizens were not informed about the 'Decade of Roma'. Greater familiarity was noticed among the male Roma population and the educated young female Roma from Skopje, who presented deeper insights in the social activities related to the Roma issues.**
- **Different opinions appeared between the male and the female population with regards to the 'Decade of the Roma'. While the female citizens welcome the idea behind "Decade of the Roma' as one more effort of the international community directed to help the Roma, the male population saw the 'Decade of the Roma' as an attempt to make core changes in the participation of the Roma in the society and their larger integration, and most of them considered the 'Decade of the Roma' a breaking point.**
- **While the male Roma population from Prilep and the female population from Skopje expected good acceptance of the activities of the 'Decade of Roma' by the rest of the non Roma citizens, as a positive social change, the female Roma citizens from Stip expressed fear that the activities of the "decade of the Roma' might provoke dissatisfaction, taking in consideration the poverty among all of the citizens, including the Macedonians, who might feel the Roma as privileged.**
- **Only the male citizens from Prilep stressed that the success of the 'Decade of the Roma' depends on the active participation of the Roma communities in direction of undertaking the projects that are planned by it. Contrary to them, the female citizens didn't have a concept about the participation of the Roma population.**

- **All citizens accepted the activities, related to the education, employment and health, which would stem out of the 'Decade of the Roma', as necessary measures.**
- **The female participants expressed distrust in the Roma political leaders and believed that none of them is capable of taking essential part in solving the problems of the Roma. Contrary to them, the male citizens mentioned two Parliament members, Amdi Bajram and, especially the first Roma member of the Parliament, Faik Abdi, who, according to their opinion, opened the Roma issue in Macedonia and expressed the need for the integration of the Roma in the society.**
- **The participation of the Institute for Open Society and the World Bank are true guarantees for the majority of Roma about the success of the 'Decade of the Roma' and its positive effects in direction of improving the life of Roma.**
- **Most of the citizens also agreed over the concept that Roma should play the leading role in achieving the goals planned by the Decade.**
- **The citizens didn't have joint attitude toward the participation of the Governments of the participant states in the project. While the male citizens believed in the promises and the readiness of the Governments to participate the Decade, and believed that it would contribute to the achievement of the goals, the female participants had their reserves and stuck to the concept of receiving help from international and non governmental organizations, as a source that they trusted most.**

Methodology

Procedure-Technique

Focus group discussion technique (qualitative research method which consists of discussion of approximately 90 to 120 minutes, led by a trained moderator, and involving six to ten persons) was used for two reasons:

- It allows deeper understanding of the overt behavior, attitudes, motives, beliefs, etc.
- The technique makes it possible to collect a lot of information in a short amount of time.

Focus groups (as well as the other types of qualitative research) do not allow any kind of quantitative generalization of the results on the population. The only reliable result coming from focus groups is the identification of the typical opinions, attitudes, and feelings on the topic discussed. The findings can only be considered as typical for the population, but cannot be used in any way for the assessments of their quantitative distribution in the population, (proportion of the typical attitudes). Due to quasi-random sampling procedure or/and small sample, the sampling error cannot be identified.

Standard SMMRI FGD Procedure

- Discussion guide - created and finalized on the bases of a draft provided by Client and sent back for final approval.
- Participants selection procedure - using the screening questionnaire based on the agreed criteria
- Recruitment - completed through SMMRI interviewers team in 3 to 5 days; recruitment includes incentives for participants. Participants are selected through quasi random procedure

Technical facilities

- VHS videotaping
- In another room TV set, so Client can monitor the discussion directly
- Simultaneous translate of recorded discussions

Project scope

The research with Roma participants was realized through discussions in three focus groups in three cities in Macedonia (Skopje, Stip and Prilep) where large Roma communities exist. Eight participants were in one group selected through the following group criteria:

ROMA GROUPS STRUCTURE

Age	Roma population		
	Skopje	Prilep	Stip
	Male	Male	Female
18 to 30	x		
31 to 60		x	x
Total	1	1	1
	3		

The participants in focus groups were selected through a quasi random procedure, with a screening questionnaire, using previously agreed quota that address:

- gender,
- age,
- education,
- occupation,
- income,
- marital status and
- number of household members.

Depending on composition of the group, inner dynamics and interaction among participants, the duration of the conversation was between 110 and 120 minutes.

SURVEY RESULTS

1. Situation in the country

- **Most of the Roma only listed the daily problems faced by the Roma population and couldn't give their opinion about the direction in which the country goes. Looking from the perspective of unemployment and poverty, the majority of the Roma believed that the country stagnates or moves not in positive direction.**

E: Of course our life is bad, unemployment. There's nothing good, I have 5 children, I don't have money to buy them anything, we wait for the social welfare. Things are getting worse.

Su: It's a catastrophe. It's ok while you are taking a walk, but it's hard when you start thinking about the situation.

F: We neither receive social welfare, nor anything else. They don't give us.

Dilber: It's not good, poverty, unemployment, no social welfare.

S: There should be some future for the children. We are not that important, but what will happen to the children?

Sil: Nobody wants to beg. We enjoy our freedom, but we also suffer from poverty.

Mis: We are going in a wrong direction. There should be one employed from each family. In some families, all five members are employed, while in some, none.

J2: There should be books for the children; the 2000 denars of social welfare are not enough for the books.

A: I don't have money to renew my ID card.

J2: There's a rumor that they would cancel the counter shops because they are illegal. What else should they do?

Muk2: Nothing is improved; things will get better if we work.

Mis: The freedom is the only good thing.

Mam: Dwellings are also a problem; the flat owner can chase you out any moment he decides.

- **The bad political and economical circumstances were identified as the key reasons for the unemployment and the poverty of all citizens, including the Roma. Underestimation of the Roma, according to a large number of the participants, could be considered additional factor for the bad situation in which the Roma population finds itself.**

Nejle: The state is in crises, that's it.

Sil: Life is hard for everyone, not only for the Roma.

El: The state is responsible for everything.

Mal: It's bad for everyone, especially the Roma. Nobody opens the door to a Roma.

Mis: And the education. The kid is criticized in the school for being a Roma.

Muk: No matter how hard it studied, the kid knows that it would be criticized because it's Roma.

A: We are underestimated even at the doctor's.

J2: The laws should be respected by all, including the Roma. We should be respected.

F: The factories don't work. The state can't help us, even if it wanted to.

Mal: Why didn't they privatize the factories? I used to work, but now I'm 47 and I still don't have my pension.

H: Additionally, we are discriminated by the Macedonians.

- **The male Roma citizens were more familiar with the ongoing social activities, and only these Euro-Atlantic processes would inevitably bring positive changes in solving the Roma problems related to the employment.**

H: Macedonia wants to join the EU, and over this issue, we are moving in a good direction, but regarding the employment, we are moving in a wrong direction.

T: We want to join the EU, and that's ok. But our people are unemployed.

Mam: We want to join EU and we hope for better life.

H: If we join the EU there would be improvements in the health, employment, economy; we are not doing anything like this.

2. Identity as a Roma

- **According to the largest number of the female Roma citizens, being Roma means to be poor, unemployed and underestimated by the rest of the citizens in the country. These feelings were also shared by the male Roma citizens, who added that they are still proud to be Roma.**

All Roma experienced their identity mainly through the attitude that non-Roma citizens show toward them. This was followed by present living circumstances that can be seen in the Roma communities, which was part of their perception of their own identity.

J2: We are underestimated. I am proud to be Roma, but it's not nice to hear what others speak about the Roma.

Suada: We are running behind all others, we are not appreciated.

S: We are not well accepted. We are not appreciated.

J: They insult us, mostly the Albanians.

Mal: I feel all right as Roma, only the circumstances: you're nothing without a job.

H: I feel proud.

Mam: Ethnicity doesn't really matter. I feel proud to be Roma.

A: Second graded citizen.

Men: I feel proud to be Roma, God created me this way.

T: Roma are traditionally underestimated.

F: Because we can't be rich children don't go to school, they don't work.

Mis: The crises and the unemployment are the biggest problems.

- **Poverty, unemployment and rejection by the society were pointed as the biggest problems faced by the Roma in Macedonia. Smaller number of the citizens mentioned also the living conditions in the Roma settlements. The lack of education was elaborated more by the male Roma citizens.**

E: There's no money.

Dilber: Poverty, unemployment, no social welfare.

Sil: Nobody wants to beg.

A: Poverty.

J2: If we had the same conditions, we would be the same.

Mam: Dwelling is also a problem; I live in a rented house, if the owner decides he can chase me out any moment.

I: I addressed the social office about the possibility to receive help for a single parent. I don't have the money to send the kid to a dentist, I try to help it with herbs, and I can't give it to the orphanage.

H: There's no money for the hospital visits.

T: I shelter a woman from Kosovo; she can't apply for citizenship because of bad finances. And she's ill, she needs medical help, but she can't apply for the foreign donations without a citizenship. Where can I find 100 dollars for the citizenship?

I: Unemployment is a problem.

Elv: What should I pay first, I'm the only one employed.

Su: If man had a job, he would beg or clean.

According to the largest number of Roma citizens, unemployment is the key problem that challenges the Roma population in Macedonia and is a direct cause for the poverty and the bad position of the Roma. Contrary to the female Roma citizens, who mainly only numbered the unemployment as problem, expecting the solution from the higher instances of the system, significant part of the male Roma citizens associated unemployment directly to the lack of education in the Roma population.

Sil: What would happen to the children, even if they go to school, would they have better future?

H: If the child were taught from an early age, it would find a job later in the future, education is important.

Men: Most of the Roma in Prilep are poor because of the unemployment, which is caused by the lack of education. If I apply for a job, they would see that I haven't finished even seventh grade of the primary school and would be rejected, the ones with high school would get the job.

Some citizens believed, without significant differences in opinions between the male and female population, that the unemployment is contributed by the employer's tendencies to underestimate and discriminate the Roma, which sometimes also results in unequal working conditions for the Roma, compared to the other ethnicities.

Mam: We have good relations with the Macedonians, but discrimination exists. For example, in labour relations. We don't get the job because we are Roma.

Muk1: I'm well accepted in my company. We are six cleaning ladies, 4 Macedonian and 2 Roma. We, the Roma, are under graded and paid less. I clean all facilities for 5000 denars, and they clean only the offices, for 6000 denars.

A: No matter how hard I work – I'm still a Roma.

Muk1: The young people get frustrated, because wherever they apply for a job, they get rejected.

J: He gets rejected because his name is Severdzan, he is Roma.

At this point, we should stress a conviction expressed by the female participants of the groups. Namely, most of the female citizens expressed dissatisfaction with the work of the social services in the country. According to the majority of them, the social services have strict and precise application criteria and, in most of the cases, fail to be flexible and meet the requests of the Roma population.

F: We neither receive social aid, nor anything, they don't give us social aid, they don't want to.

N: They didn't find me home and cancelled my social aid, now I wait to be granted again, I have nowhere to go with my child.

- **It is interesting to point that, apart of the poverty, which was indicated as key problem, underestimation was also among the first answers to the question 'Which are the biggest problems faced by the Roma', of a large number of the interviewed Roma.**

According to the statements of the Roma citizens, they face underestimation on all levels, starting with institutions of the society (education, health, public administration) and ending with everyday interactions with the rest of the citizens. Roma citizens from Skopje, where except Macedonians, Albanians live also, especially strongly stressed the intolerant attitude that the Albanian population has toward the Roma.

Mam: Everybody underestimates us in a certain way.

J: We are insulted, mainly by the Albanians.

- **Only the male Roma population discussed the solutions to the communal and infrastructural issues in the Roma settlements.**

It could be noticed that the male population was familiar to a large degree with the duties and responsibilities of the local authorities/self-government. One could get the impression that this category was lot better informed and aware of the political circumstances in its municipality than the female population, and therefore, lot more aware of the possibilities for solutions to certain problems related to the communal and infrastructural management of their communities.

Therefore, it was not accident that it was the male population that emphasized the bad communal and infrastuctural conditions, as a problem faced by the Roma communities.

H: Urbanistic circumstances are catastrophic.

T: We live here for a lot of years, without sewage, or anything. The streets are not paved. The problem lies in the organs in charge.

I: The biggest problem to the Roma here is the trash.

Regarding to their political activity, most of the Roma mentioned that the local political aspirants very often manipulate their votes, promising solutions to the problems related to the communal conditions and infrastructure.

- **It is especially important to point to a part of the educated female Roma citizens from Skopje, who was convinced that the blame for the situation in which the Roma population is, partly lies in the low social activity of the Roma in Macedonia in direction of execution of its rights.**

Several citizens from the category of young educated female Roma population stressed that the Roma should look more after their rights. They expressed a wish for a certain level of separation through the request for special Roma schools, giving the example of the Albanians, who, in the recent years, successfully execute their rights in the Macedonian society with a hard political (and military) decisiveness.

Sil: We are denied our rights, we don't have our school. If we had our school; almost everybody else have their own schools.

Sev: It's our own fault, they (the Albanians) fight for their rights, and we don't.

Aj: The difference is bigger now, the Albanians are in better position, Roma are in the worst.

- **Taking in consideration that the most usual interaction between the Roma and the rest of the non Roma population is in the institutions, mainly the health centres, social care offices, schools and the public administration, large part of the opinion over the attitude of the non Roma citizens toward them, is built on the contacts at the office**

counters and the rest of the interaction modules with the employees in these institutions.

- **If the opinions of the Roma are taken in consideration, it may be concluded that, in the abovementioned institutions the Roma are not treated equally as the rest of the population. According to the majority of the Roma citizens, they face underestimation, not only on the behalf of the employees in the institutions, but also by the rest of the citizens present there.**

Mam: We live well in the street, but we are downgraded in the institutions.

Men: the people accept us, but there are cases of mistreatment as well. My kid got beaten by a police officer, because somebody else stole something, and I'm not satisfied.

Health institutions were mentioned first, where, according to the Roma citizens, they don't always receive the needed attention by the medical staff.

Mal: I took my grandchild to the doctor and it coughed at the nurse's desk. Because of that she told me to take the kid outside, even though 100 ill persons approach her each day. I asked her why she told me to do that, whether because I'm Roma? If I were Macedonian, I wouldn't have been treated that way.

Muk2: At the doctor's, the nurse got angry the moment my husband reacted that the injection was given badly.

At this point, the interviewed mentioned the ignoring attitude by the rest of the citizens that also seek medical service.

A: They all see the doctor before you, you would wait last.

Men: If there are Turkish, Vlah, Macedonian and Roma together in the waiting room, the Roma would not see the doctor first, even though the Roma arrived first. But this is not a rule. There's humanity among the Macedonians also.

Mis: Health system is also problematic, at the hospitals, even though it's your turn to see the doctor, the others would enter the ordination before you. It's not clear why it is so, maybe they think, she's Roma, she can wait.

Muk2: We, Roma, treat the Macedonians kindly, but they don't treat us the same.

Muk1: We are not let inside, even though it's our turn.

The schools were indicated as one more segment of life, next to the health institutions, where, according to the opinion of the Roma citizens, they are not entirely accepted. Most of the Roma citizens stated that the Roma children face underestimation and lower evaluation in the schools, which discourages them in their efforts to continue the process of education.

E: Macedonian children wouldn't study together with the Roma.

Mam: The problem lies in the citizens, not in the teachers. 60 % wouldn't study together with the Roma. When I took my girl to the school, a lot of the Macedonians didn't want to send their children in the same school, even though they were supposed to, according to the place of residence.

H: The kid wouldn't bring its homework, and the teacher expels it from the class.

H: On entering the high schools, they would see the kid's grades, then they would realize his ethnicity, and then they would say 'you don't have good grades'. The only available schools left then are the crafts schools.

Roma citizens linked the problems with the education again to the poverty and the lack of finances, stressing that Roma children find it very hard to study without books and other school materials.

A: I didn't have money to buy books for my kid when it started high school, it attended the classes anyway. I applied for scholarship, but no, they didn't grant us anything. Even more, it was always accused of coming too late for the classes.

I: Members of the international organizations promised free books 2-3 years ago. I went to see the principle of the school and he confirmed the information. School year started, and after 2-3 months my child was asked to bring its books. Now, where do I find the money for the books with the 800 denars I make during the month?

Men: We were 8 children, our parents could satisfy every of our needs.

Su: The children don't go to school because of poverty, but the same thing happens in the western countries as well.

J: The parents don't have the money to send their children to school. How much does one book cost? If there were someone to help us, at least over the primary school.

Still, certain part of the Roma citizens stressed that the children's wish to study often plays decisive role whether they would join the education process or not.

Mam: We are not educated, and that presents a problem. There are also kids that don't want to go to school.

Su: The educated enjoy their rights, but there are some that don't want to go to school, what to do with those that prefer to work?

J2: Every case is different to the other. It depends on the child's wishes, how much it wants to study.

Even though the fact that male children go to school more than the female children appeared during the discussions, very small number of the Roma citizens were ready to publicly debate over this issue. Yet, some of the female Roma citizens from Stip expressed their opinion.

Muk2: The boys should be sent to school.

N: Boys, but also the girls too, should be sent to school.

Mis: Gender doesn't matter, in the textile industry, they require finished school, and it's a woman's job, now, shouldn't girls go to school too?

- **The citizens from different cities had different experiences regarding the acceptance of the Roma on individual level. The Roma citizens from Prilep and Stip pointed that, besides the common prejudices and the underestimation that the Roma face, they are well accepted on individual level, by the people that they have daily contacts with.**

A: I lived quite well while I was working. You would sometimes get called "Gipsy" or "Baba", but you wouldn't mind.

E: We shouldn't feel ashamed of who we are.

A: Our wardrobe and behaviour could be the reasons for our rejection.

- **Contrary to them, the Roma citizens from Skopje, where, apart of the dominant Macedonian population, there's also a large Albanian community, stressed the rejective and especially hard intolerant attitude that the Albanian population perform toward the Roma.**

J: We are insulted often, especially by the Albanians.

El: Albanians insult us, throw things at us, all I can do is keep my head down and run.

- **The Roma from Prilep stated the fact that their community consists of "old settlers", citizens of Prilep of Roma ethnicity, and "newcomers", nomad Roma that settled in the city in the last ten years, which, beside the high level of integration, still provoke incidents, mostly inside the Roma community.**

Even though the level of integration of Roma – "newcomers" in the daily life and their acceptance of the life habits of the Roma – "old settlers" is satisfactory, incidents between these two groups are frequent, especially among the young population.

T: How come these differences don't exist in Skopje? Here, there are only two types, "old settlers" and "newcomers".

Mam: We shouldn't make any distinctions. There are no big differences.

T: They are different at the parties. I think of the young people. Some of them (the newcomers) come and cause trouble.

- **According to the opinion of the interviewed citizens, poverty, compared to the other ethnic communities, is worst among the Roma, even though it affects everybody in Macedonia. This is due to the lack of education, but also because of the principles of employment in Macedonia, which are based on friendships and contacts with man on**

power, criteria according which the Roma don't stand a chance due to their absence from important social positions.

Men: Let's look at the Turkish or the Vlachs, are only Roma poor? The problems are the same among the poor.

Sev: There are lot of problems that others face too, poverty is intense among them as well, but they are slightly different then us, what counts is the interventions.

Sil: They are educated and they get the jobs using their contacts, we don't have such contacts.

H: Macedonians, we are not that many.

Mal: Everybody is in the same situation, but the Roma suffer most. Additionally, one can't find a job without pulling some strings and using some friendships.

Muk2: We want to work.

The biggest discussion over the problems that the other minorities face was lead between the citizens of Skopje, which was logical expectation, taking in consideration that in Skopje there's also an Albanian community, to which the Roma community was most often compared. After drawing common conclusions and comparing the communities, the Roma citizens from Skopje were convinced that the basic difference between the Roma and the Albanian population is in the principles by which the communities function. According to the Roma, Albanian community acts as one, while the Roma community is more divergent, and therefore unable to focus more on solving the problems and improving its life.

Su: We share the same problems but we are of heavier category. They (the Albanians) support each other, help each other, we envy each other and argue each other.

H: Albanians are unison, if a little Albanian boy is bullied while selling stuff, they would all defend him, and there are more of them participating in the institutions of the system, but yet, we have our representatives as well.

- **According to the observations of the Roma citizens, there isn't any positive, unemployment related, trend in the country during the recent years. Yet, most of the citizens expressed hopes for better future for the coming generations. These hopes were built on the fact that level of education of the young Roma increased significantly.**

Unemployment still remains the worst problem challenging the Roma. Roma citizens agreed that the situation related to this issue is unchanged.

Nevertheless, large number of citizens stressed that the attitudes and the opinions of the young generations of Roma changed recently in direction of increased participation in the education process, which was commented as a positive trend that might increase the future employment opportunities of the Roma.

T: Our parents weren't able to send us to school; we should avoid this.

H: The perspectives of the young people are improved. For instance, 50 children finished primary school last year, maybe they would be 200 this year. We can meet in Skopje even people with university degree.

Su: It depends, some improved and some didn't, some finished school and work.

Sil: The young generations made a better start; lot more young people study. They used to get married at 14, now at 25, 26, they decide to study first. I believe that the young people started their way forward.

Su: TV report said that the youth had started to study. The number of those that study has increased.

Mis: The NGOs improved the situation with the education; the second group of students already finished the night school.

A: If the children are left without education, the situation will not improve.

J2: If the kid finishes higher levels of education, it will succeed in finding a job. If not, what will become of it?

The participants pointed that the young generations are lot more aware of the position of the Roma in the society, and expressed hopes and expectations that the young generations would be able to do something more for the improvement of the life of Roma in Macedonia.

T: We were blind, but the children today keep their eyes wide open. I would be glad to have Roma that would guide us.

E: It's better than before, there's guidance for the young.

Dil: The young people today are better than their elders; they started to study, to travel the world. They can see how we are living and they think more about the future.

Naj: This generation is more educated, more polite, slightly better than ours. And they think better.

Su: The new generations think a lot.

S: They can see that you have nothing to give them and ask themselves how do we live here. And think about improving the situation.

- **Except the increase of level of education, which should improve the employment opportunities, several young and educated female Roma citizens from Skopje said that the decrease of the number of children in the family would contribute to smaller life expenses and improvement of life, attitude that was not shared by the senior women.**

El: People should take care how many children they have.

Su: If you have money, you have everything. It doesn't matter how many children you have.

F: We shouldn't have large number of children.

Sak: I still don't have any children, but two would be enough.

3. Greater Integration in the Community at Large

- **Most painful point in the communication between Roma and other people is the use of the name. Most of the people don't address them by the name Roma, but calls them Gypsies, name associated to the negative attributes assigned to the inherited stereotype for the Roma.**

A: They don't show respect for our name.

Mam: There is a reason why he should call you Gypsy. It is well know, we come from India.

- **The majority of the Roma population considered the Macedonian people tolerant in general. Referring to the issue of integration in the society, most of the Roma stressed that, individually, they are well accepted by the Macedonians with which they interact daily, yet still, with a certain dose of lower appreciation.**

From that perspective, the interviewed Roma confirmed that they are well accepted by the citizens that interact with them daily, beside the certain dose of under appreciation that is usually present in the attitude of the Macedonians toward Roma. Still, this is not always the case in the initial contacts with Macedonians.

Dil: It's ok with those that we hang around. We don't hear bad words coming from them.

Elv: I am well accepted, we drink coffee together, go out, I spend every day with them.

E: They were tolerant toward me so far.

I: Nothing has changed, everybody is accepted.

T: It depends individually. There's no hatred.

Sev: I am well accepted in my neighborhood, but every now and then, a passer by would throw in a word.

Su: No matter how well he treats you, he would still insult you, it is not quite so that we are well accepted.

N: I live among Macedonians, and my family is well accepted. My children are also well accepted.

Mal: There are mutual friendships, but they offend a lot, wherever you go; you don't enjoy the respect normally paid to a Macedonian.

Muk2: My children are respected; I have no complaints.

N: My neighbors are good people. Maybe some Macedonians offend me, I don't know their attitude toward our people.

- **In the relations with citizens with which they don't have regular contacts and which they don't know personally, according to the**

statements of the citizens, Roma face underestimation stemming from the common picture of the Roma as people of lower value.

Beside the common prejudgment about Roma as people of lower stadium of progress, they face different levels of acceptance during the first contacts with non Roma citizens. According to the opinion of the interviewed citizens, the reason behind this is the individual attitude of the citizens. None of the Roma tried to make a general picture about the Macedonians, and according to their belief, the level of communication and their acceptance greatly depend on the individual attitude and altruism of the citizens.

J2: We are underestimated. They threaten their children they would leave them 'like the little Gypsy in the street'. What does this mean? We are not animals, we are people.

Sev: We, the Roma, are considered less developed, and we are put behind everybody else.

S: It is as it used to be, there're good people and bad people.

Su: He is polite when talking to you, but speaks differently behind your back.

Fik: Good.

Dil: Just like the Roma, there are good people and bad people.

F: It depends. Generally speaking, I believe that Roma are well accepted. The foreigners receive more attention.

Mis: Macedonians are tolerant because they are educated, and with education you also learn politeness.

During the discussion about the prejudices in the Macedonian society against the Roma, first mentioned was the attitude of the Macedonian citizens who believe that the Roma are dishonest and inclined to small thefts. This is contributed by the bad examples that happen, making grounds for such reputation of the Roma population.

Silv: We are not that well accepted. But only by the Macedonians, also by the other nationalities; if you're let in the house, the house owner is convinced you would try to steal something.

F: She believes you enter her house to steal something.

Muk1: In our company, we were once accused of stealing when in fact a Macedonian woman was doing that. They caught her and fired her.

N: But she was not insulted, just fired. If they had caught you stealing, you would have been insulted. The purses of the Roma women are constantly checked before leaving the company premises; they want to check if we had stolen anything.

For that reason exactly most of the Roma stressed that each one of them has to prove his honesty during the everyday contacts.

Sev: If you get well judged, you'll get accepted.

N: It was a bit hard when we moved in, but then I was accepted.

Mis: Why we moved in that Macedonian neighborhood? It showed with time that we had made a good decision.

Roma from Skopje, where a large Albanian community lives next to the dominant Macedonian population, stressed that high level of intolerance toward them is performed by the Albanians.

- **According to the most of the Roma citizens, the integration of the Roma in the society is increased during the recent years. The male participants from Prilep stressed that the presence of Roma children in the schools has also significantly increased during the last few years, and the female Roma citizens from Stip stressed that even the Macedonians tend to use the name 'Roma', instead of 'Gypsies', more and more often.**

Larger number of the Roma citizens believed that Roma integration in the society improved notably. Male participants from Prilep pointed to the education of the Roma children as the largest potential for the integration. According to their information, the level of education in Roma children made a notable raise.

According to the Roma citizens from Stip, the more frequent use of the name 'Roma', instead of the offending 'Gypsy', contributes to the integration processes.

J2: There's a difference; We used to be called 'Gypsies', now we are called 'Roma'.

- **All Roma citizens, regardless of their gender, age and place of residence, believed that it would be better if the relations between the Roma and non Roma intensified. This would contribute to the broader opportunities for prosperity of the young generations of Roma and to the improved appreciation of the Roma in general.**

Integration of the Roma in the society is possible and desired by almost all Roma citizens, although none of them was able to give any ideas how it should run.

N: We mingle with the Macedonians on all levels, why not? There are good and bad among them as well, just like the Roma.

F: We come and leave with Macedonians. It would be better if we do that more often.

Sev: I interact with Macedonians. It would be better if were integrated more. I would like to make friends with everybody.

Su: It would be better for me and my family if we interacted with everybody. If the grown ups live well, the children would be good also, not only toward the Macedonians, but to the Roma too.

- **Regarding the larger integration in the society, the Roma didn't see any obstacles coming from the Government or the institutions of the system, but they placed the problems in the underestimations from the other, non Roma, population. The prejudices that the non Roma population have against them, according to the Roma citizens, are built on the bad personal experiences that some of the citizens have with Roma, and those experiences, sometimes unnecessarily, confirm the stereotype about the Roma.**

Sev: We are not the same, but even the worthy ones are underestimated.

E: If single Roma does something wrong, they would assign it to the all Roma, they generalize.

Yet, some of the Roma citizens confessed that the feeling of wariness present in the non – Roma population toward them is sometimes justified, taking in consideration the bad examples. Large number of the Roma shared the need, or, the responsibility to refute the bad reputation of the Roma population in their individual interactions with the non-Roma citizens.

- **Large number of Roma from Skopje, where next to the Macedonians there are also large minority groups of Albanians and Turkish, stressed that larger integration is needed not only among the Macedonians, but also among the Albanians and the Turkish, by whom they are least accepted.**

Roma from Skopje felt the need of intensifying the relations with the Turkish and Albanians too, mainly because of their common Islam religion. According to their opinion, these relationships are equally important. Some of the participants stressed the need for closer relationship with the Albanians, taking in consideration the relatively rejective attitude that they present toward Roma.

Su: If he is a good man, it wouldn't be bad if he mingled with both, Macedonians and Albanians.

E: Everything is cool, regardless whether with Turks, Roma or Albanians, only to live together.

Sil: It would be better if we are all together, Turks, Albanians and Roma.

Elv: The Roma and Albanians that used to have good relations, still maintain the quality of the relationship. But new friendships...

N: My grandfather was imam, and our home was visited by all sorts of people, it didn't matter what nationality you are.

- **Most of the Roma citizens didn't believe that segregation of the Roma is necessary measure for improvement of the life of Roma. They once**

again repeated their strong wish for integration and affirmation among all people in the society, investing by that, in the future of their generations,

Su: It would be good for our children. Everything depends on you. If you have good parents and people respect you...

Sev: It would be good for our future too. They would find it a bit strange, but you would also, until getting used to.

Sil: it would be better if we got closer, we wouldn't be afraid of each other.

Mis: The interactions with the Macedonians are frequent and I would like to have them even more often.

Muk2: To increase the number of interactions. That would be better.

A: It would be our honor as well to have closer interactions. But only if respected.

N: How you treat others, others would treat you the same.

J2: I believe they will accept us with time. We all live in Macedonia after all.

- **It should be mentioned that the idea for segregation of Roma was rejected by the majority of Roma citizens, even though a part of the female Roma citizens from Stip articulated the opinion that living separately might have a positive impact on the self awareness of the Roma community, offering the opportunity to feel its authenticity.**

J2: I gave that idea a thought also, but I'm not sure how much time it takes. It would be our little state. I believe we should.

A: To stick to one another.

Mis: It would be best not to be divided, only to have our rights respected and to be offended.

N: No difference, we all live in Macedonia.

4. Helping your community

- e. **Most of the Roma believed that the authorities e.g. the political parties on power always took the Roma only as potential votes. Regardless of which part of the country they were coming from, the Roma said that their communication with the political structures is only during the pre election period.**

Problems that challenge the Roma in their daily activities are on the agenda only during the pre election races between the political parties that fight for the power, regardless whether on the local or the general elections. Most of the Roma confirmed that there is an increased interest in the problems of the Roma during the pre election period, and that a lot of promises for solutions are made in the same period. But the experiences of

the Roma prove that it is only a pre election manipulation. Even the Roma leaders don't act differently in their role of participants in the local politics.

Su: The government takes care of its own businesses, the politicians spend the money on themselves, they only look and do nothing, they only promise and do nothing. They see how we live, if we don't support them then who would?

Dil: The authorities need you only when they have a problem.

Sil: They would promise everything, and then, nothing.

N: All the best, and then, nothing.

A: They make promises only before the elections.

Muk2: My husband knows the Mayor personally. Before the elections he promised that everything will be all right, but afterwards he pretended he didn't know him.

- **The usual address to which most of the request, for solutions of the existential problems, the Roma sent to was the Government, taking in consideration that it is a responsibility of the Government to deal with the poverty by opening new jobs and distributing social aid.**

Different opinions were presented in various cities regarding the responsibility of the Government toward the Roma population. Roma women from Skopje, more than anybody else, believed that the Government should deal firstly with the employment, while the Roma women from Stip mostly talked about their expectations from the Government related to the contribution of social welfare to the Roma families. Conclusively, in general terms, the employment and social welfare were the two biggest problems that the Roma citizens addressed to the Government.

Sev: The Government should restart the factories and provide us jobs.

Mis: Factories should be open, so that we could get jobs. We are young, why shouldn't we work?

Mal: Our families are bigger, and they (the Macedonians) have only child in theirs. At least one member of the family should be employed so that the Social Care Office wouldn't have to give money away.

A: If there were more jobs, the more money from the social welfare could be redirected to those that are unable to work, the invalids.

H: Old persons should receive social welfare.

I: If the Government and the Mayor join their efforts to help the Roma, would life be improved. I receive 800 denars social aid. If I receive 2000 denars, I would send my child to the school.

E: Social help is not what we need, we need employment.

Although there were expectations related to the both issues (employment and social welfare), the male Roma citizens from Prilep preferred having employment to receiving social welfare.

- **None of the interviewed citizens had a distinct opinion about the amount of money that the Government should direct to helping Roma. The large sums of money of the state level were unperceptive for them, so majority of the citizens were more interested in the Government's readiness to help than in the actual amount that it would invest.**

J2: We don't know the number of Roma. We don't know how much money they should give each.

- **Regardless of the different expectations from the Macedonian Government, all Roma citizens thought that the situation in which the country finds itself is extremely bad, and therefore, not always can the Government deal with the problems, not only of the Roma, but of the other citizens in the country too. Thus, none of the Roma citizens believed that it was Government or system policy of discrimination against them.**

Sev: The Government wants to help, but cannot because of other needs. Even if it wants, it cannot, money is needed for other things.

N: I believe that the Government wants to help, but lacks the means.

T: The Government wants and should help.

H: The Government doesn't have the money. It made mistakes with the factories. If the factories were opened, the people wouldn't have starved. Now, it pays social welfare.

Mam: The Government knows, we don't. We are not interested.

Regarding the government help for the Roma, the citizens from Stip were convinced that it doesn't have same attitude toward the Roma from Skopje and the Roma from the other cities. According to their opinion, Roma from Skopje are privileged and given more attention and money than the rest of the Roma in the country.

J2: They are more interested in the Roma from Skopje, and don't ask about the rest of the cities.

J2: They built cabins in Skopje, and in Stip, nothing.

Mal: The Government is interested only in Skopje. It sees Skopje as the whole of Macedonia.

- **Even though the Roma citizens frequently repeated that the Roma are the most economically endangered category in the state, none of them expressed an opinion that Roma should be helped more than other poor people in the country.**

Taking in consideration the present circumstances, the Roma citizens were convinced that poverty is shared by all ethnic communities in the country. Although part of them

stressed that the Roma are poorest of all, all citizens shared the belief that regarding the state help nobody should be privileged. Roma citizens noticed poverty, as a problem of today, among all minorities – Turks, Albanians, but among the Macedonian families as well. According to them, it's government responsibility to deal with the poverty in general.

N: It should help everybody, not only Roma.

Sev: Everybody should be treated equally, what I want, somebody else wants it also, if possibilities open for one, why not for another, the problem of poverty is shared by all.

Silv: I believe that Roma are the lowest social class, so they should be helped most.

Others should be helped too, but the number of receivers of social help is highest among Roma.

Sev: If there were jobs, there would be plenty for everybody.

Dil: There are also poor Macedonians and Albanians. Something should be done for everybody.

N2: For the Roma and for anybody else.

Mis: I speak about the Roma, because most of the Macedonians are employed.

J2: The help should be directed to all, in general, not only to the Roma.

Mam: Everybody should be treated the same.

Il: Not only the Roma, everybody should be treated equally.

The female Roma citizens from Stip especially strongly supported the intensifying of the social help for all people, and taking in consideration that the poverty is most spread among the Roma, this would directly help exactly the Roma population.

- **If they had the chance to talk to the Prime Minister of the Government, biggest part of the Roma citizens would ask for assistance in solving their employment status.**

Most of the Roma would demand employment from the Prime Minister of the Government. The exception was made by the citizens of Stip, who believed that their pleas would not be taken in consideration in any way, and therefore, were not ready to state any specific expectations from the Prime Minister.

Silv: Employment first, that would solve all other problems.

Najle: Employment first, then social welfare.

Fikrie: I want a job, why should I suffer while begging in the sun? Man has to work because man cannot endure hunger. If you steal, you would get caught, it's better to beg.

E: Employment.

Sev: Employment for all.

Su: To get employed, to be insured, to do finely what they promised.

Gjul: Employment.

F: We can't find a job.

N: He wouldn't fulfill our pleas.

A: I would ask him for a job.

E: Employment.

Men: To offer the same opportunities to the Macedonians and to the Roma, to have jobs for all. If the Roma lack education, than they have their physical strength for manual work.

Mom: Employment must come first.

Most of the female Roma citizens from Stip believed that the demands for improvement of the infrastructure in the Roma settlements are responsibility of the Prime Minister.

Mis: Employment and paved streets for the children.

Mal: I would ask him to repair our streets.

A: To put street lights and to build the water reservoir.

- **All Roma citizens expressed bitter dissatisfaction from the activities of the local authorities, and pointed to sewage, garbage disposal, water supply and streets condition as the main unsolved problems in the settlements where Roma live. Regarding the responsibilities of the local authorities and the problems it should deal with, male citizens presented more insight than the female citizens.**

Su: We asked a lot, but they didn't do anything. I see they demand money from the market counters as well, but that's the way people earn money for their bred.

Mis: You cannot reach Radenski Pat (Roma settlement). There's no sewage, no road... Somebody should come to see how Roma live.

J2: They don't even have garbage bins. The Mayor of Stip should do something. He promised to build the sewage, but he did nothing.

N: We have our (Roma) member in the Council, he should join the Government and make them do something.

Mis: They make promises, but do nothing. He says he will help us before he takes the position, and later pretends we don't exist.

E: If you try to see the Mayor, you would never succeed. He is either on a trip, or out of the office.

A: They do nothing.

Men: If take a look behind, they did nothing during the last 8 years.

Apart of the employment and the social welfare which should be sorted by the central authorities, the Roma citizens believed that larger number of the problems related to the communal and infrastructural domain could be solved by the local authorities. Street management, garbage disposal, sewage and water supply were pointed as most common problems in the Roma settlements.

Su: Neither the Mayor, nor the members of the Council did anything. They said they would repair the streets, but they only worked on few of them.

E: I ask nothing more than water supply and sewage.

Silv: Sewage.

N: To repair the streets.

The male Roma citizens from Prilep stressed the problem of garbage disposal and the river, which largest number of citizens use to dump their waste. The citizens of Prilep had lot more information than the others what should be done on the local level in order to improve the quality of life of the Roma. They numbered the building of the garbage disposal area, sewage, street lights, opening of a pharmacy and building a health centers, sport facilities and a park, as projects that would raise the quality of life of Roma.

Men: Help for the Roma to live as good as the Macedonians, to have a sewage, health centre, pharmacies, and paved streets.

Mam: Sport facilities.

Men: Entertainment for the young people, to clean and cover the river.

H: I would ask the Mayor for a multicultural centre where young people would be educated and employment.

I: Parks and playgrounds for the children.

- **The male and the female population were clearly divided over the opinions about the activities that should be undertaken by the Roma community in direction of improving the life quality and solving the problems that the Roma face. The largest part of the female population believed that the Roma community can't do much by itself and that help is to come only 'from outside'. Contrary to them, the male citizens clearly pointed to the role of the Roma community in the education of young generations, mainly in direction of enforced process of education.**

Most of the Roma citizens believed that the Roma communities are incapable to do anything in direction of improvement of the situation in which they find themselves. It could be noticed that all of them relied on help, mainly financial, that would come from outside. Regarding this issue, only the citizens of Stip presented intensive activities of Roma non-governmental organizations. The responsibilities of the non-governmental sector, according to the Roma citizens from Stip, include management of the donations in the Roma communities and certain education activities.

E: It's Government responsibility, not ours.

Su: No reason to do something on our own, we have a Mayor. He intended to do something, but he does very slowly.

Sil: We wonder if the local authorities would do something, we are waiting for so long, and still nothing. There are organizations that help; my daughter goes there after school, they write the homework together, they give the children books, clothes, meals.

Mis: NGOs would help a lot, life of Roma would improve, there are number of Roma NGOs.

J2: Organize humanitarian concerts. I can't help in other way then with advises.

Mis: If I ran a NGO, I would help with projects related to the education, employment, upbringing of the children.

F: I can't help otherwise except with advises.

A: If somebody is worried, I would tell him not to worry.

N: Man can give advice, but man should help.

A: We can't on our own, somebody else should help us.

Contrary to the female population, the male Roma citizens believed that the solution to one of the key problems of the Roma – education should start inside their communities. According to a large number of male citizens, the parents should force their children to study which would put the future generations of Roma in a better position.

Mam: We should educate ourselves.

H: That's most important.

E: Everybody should take care of the education of their children.

- **It should be stressed that the disagreements in the Roma communities, which were emphasized by almost all Roma citizens, regardless of the place of residence, only contribute to the opinion that the Roma communities are incapable to organize themselves more seriously in order to solve their own problems.**

All Roma citizens considered the disagreements in the Roma communities as key factor that doesn't allow more successful organization of the communities and solving some of the problems faced by them. This attitude was especially strong among the male Roma citizens from Prilep, who stressed that the distorted communication between the Roma representatives in the local self-government and the citizens of the communities presents only an obstacle toward the solutions of the problems.

Sev: Not the community. They all fight each other.

Dil: Roma should act as one, but they don't.

H: helping ourselves is easy, but at the same time hard. We don't have local self-government, which is essential, and we lack it for 5-6 years. The problem is in the people; some of them have higher opinion of them and wouldn't gather to discuss the problems.

- **Besides their participation in the structures of the local self-government, none of the Roma evaluated positively the efforts of the Roma representatives to solve the problems in the settlements where Roma live.**

Most of the Roma citizens said that they don't have leaders, in the right terms of the word. According to their opinion, the local Roma leaders are incapable to act in direction of finding solutions for the problem of the community. The male citizens from Prilep even stressed that there are self appointed leaders in their community, who only abuse the facilities and the entitlements of the local self-government.

Sil: The leaders should take better care for the Roma, to realize the situation in which we are; I believe they try, but they still haven't achieved anything.

A: Somebody should take care about us, regardless if it was Macedonian or Roma, but we don't trust anybody.

Mis: The leaders should gather and do something, instead of giving false promises.

J2: We don't have a leader.

Mam: We were guided by wrong people. They are still on power and wouldn't give the keys to the offices of the local self-government.

E: They are older than 60 and still want to rule.

H: Illiterate leaders.

According to the male Roma citizens from Prilep, the ideal leader would be toe one that fights for the improvement of the life of Roma, but starting from his own community.

H: To create better life for the Roma population.

T: To improve the life among the poor.

5. The Decade of the Roma

- **Only the female Roma citizens from Stip were aware of the national efforts to improve the life of Roma. Surprisingly, they gave the example of building cabins for the Roma families in Skopje, something that was not mentioned by the interviewed group from Skopje.**

Mis: They built the cabins in Skopje, at least they did something.

Mal: Still, the Mayor of Skopje gave them to his friends.

- **Most of the Roma citizens were not informed about the 'Decade of Roma'. Greater awareness was noticed among the male Roma population and the educated young female Roma from Skopje, who**

presented deeper insights in the social activities related to the Roma issues.

Mis: I think it would last until 2015. There should be some donations and it should be humanitarian, providing employment for the Roma, dedicate more attention to the education.

J2: It should last 10 years and it should be about the Roma.

Mam: The Decade is planned for the education and the employment of the Roma.

Mem: The Decade should start with realizing what they did for the Roma in the western countries.

- **Different opinions appeared between the male and the female population with regards to the 'Decade of the Roma'. While the female citizens welcome the idea behind "Decade of the Roma' as one more effort of the international community directed to help the Roma, the male population saw the 'Decade of the Roma' as an attempt to make core changes in the participation of the Roma in the society and their larger integration, and most of them considered the 'Decade of the Roma' a breaking point.**

The female Roma citizens looked at the Decade as to another humanitarian action of the western countries and almost none of them paid any attention to this effort. All of them accepted the idea without a deeper insight in the necessity of long term changes of the life of Roma population, looking at it as single, temporary help to the Roma.

Mis: It would be good.

J2: Of course it's something positive.

Mis: We have only one leader, Senaj, who fights for the right of the Roma, but hasn't achieved anything so far. He should fight for what you read from the Decade.

Su: It should exist, and should include the employment as well.

Sil: We all want normal life, let them bring what you read, and we'll work on it.

N: It would be better.

Contrary to the female Roma population, the men were fully aware of the necessity for the actions that would stem from the Decade as the only possible way to finally change the status of the Roma population in the society. According to the largest part of the male Roma population, the Decade corresponds best to the needs and expectations of the Roma.

Men: So, somebody's contenance started working. If this starts to work the life would improve, we should work on this.

T: This is a must.

Mam: It was time for such a program.

EI: I think the other countries started even earlier.

H: If Budapest (SOROS) didn't sign it, nothing would have come out of it.

I: It is good if this is undertaken.

- **While the male Roma population from Prilep and the female population from Skopje expected good acceptance of the activities of the 'Decade of Roma' by the rest of the non Roma citizens, as a positive social change, the female Roma citizens from Stip expressed fear that the activities of the "decade of the Roma' might provoke dissatisfaction, taking in consideration the poverty among all of the citizens, including the Macedonians, who might feel the Roma as privileged.**

Biggest number of the Roma citizens believed that the activities of the Decade of the Roma would be well accepted by the other non-Roma population. Taking in consideration that the activities are directed to the improvement of the life of Roma, without causing any damages to anyone else, contributing to the general wellbeing in the country, none of the citizens expected serious disagreements and rejection of the activities planned with the Decade of the Roma by the non-Roma population.

H: The Roma population lives in extreme poverty, and the whole of Europe watches it, there shouldn't be any problems to help them.

E: The others wouldn't mind, nobody would mind if there were educated Roma.

I: They would accept it, normally.

A: Normally.

Sev: It would be positively accepted by the others.

N: Why should they object? When others have, we should have also.

Su: Everybody should enjoy his rights. This issue is going to be positively commented, there wouldn't be any more people begging in the streets.

Only the female Roma citizens from Stip expressed different opinion regarding this issue. They expressed serious doubts and fear that the rest of the non-Roma population would be irritated and reject the activities stemming out of the Decade.

Mis: They should positively accept it.

J2: I think it should be accepted.

F: It might raise small negative reactions.

Mis: It would be negatively accepted, which should be the case.

Ne: It should be positively accepted, but I cannot predict the reaction.

- **Only the male citizens from Prilep stressed that the success of the 'Decade of the Roma' depends on the active participation of the Roma communities in direction of undertaking the projects that are planned**

by it. Contrary to them, the female citizens didn't have a concept about the participation of the Roma population.

E: It's for our own good; they should be interested in its implementation.

Mom: It would take an experienced leader to implement it.

- **All citizens accepted the activities, related to the education, employment and health, which would stem out of the 'Decade of the Roma', as necessary measures.**

The only additions to the list of activities planned by the Decade in the domain of health were made by the female Roma citizens. Except the planned free vaccines for the Roma children, the mentioned category of citizens stressed the necessity of other health services too, like checks, and therapies for the Roma citizens that cannot have them normally.

Mis: Not only free vaccines, but we should also be provided free medicaments and therapies.

A: The patients lying in the hospitals should be taken in consideration also.

J2: The visits to the gynecologists should be included too.

Su: Not only free vaccines, help should be provided for the injections and the visits to the ordinations also.

6. Ambassadors of Change: Voices to Trust

- **The female participants expressed distrust in the Roma political leaders and believed that none of them is capable of taking essential part in solving the problems of the Roma. Contrary to them, the male citizens mentioned two Parliament members, Amdi Bajram and, especially the first Roma member of the Parliament, Faik Abdi, who, according to their opinion, opened the Roma issue in Macedonia and expressed the need for the integration of the Roma in the society.**

7. Message concepts

- **The participation of the Institute for Open Society and the World Bank are true guarantees for the majority of Roma about the success of the 'Decade of the Roma' and its positive effects in direction of improving the life of Roma.**
- **Most of the citizens also agreed over the concept that Roma should play the leading role in achieving the goals planned by the Decade.**
- **The citizens didn't have joint attitude toward the participation of the Governments of the participant states in the project. While the male citizens believed in the promises and the readiness of the Governments**

to participate the Decade, and believed that it would contribute to the achievement of the goals, the female participants had their reserves and stuck to the concept of receiving help from international and non governmental organizations, as a source that they trusted most.