

At Risk:



The Social Vulnerability of Roma in Albania



United Nations Development Programme
(UNDP) in Albania

Tirana, August 2006

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Tirana-based Center for Economic and Social Studies (CESS) and its authors Ilir Gedeshi, Ana Janku and Enkelejda Shehi produced the first draft of this report. The UNDP Albania staff - Eno Ngjela, Natasha Mistry and Michele Servadei - complemented and edited the first draft. Andi Dobrushki of the European Roma Rights Center (ERRC) provided valuable comments on the text. Andrey Ivanov of the UNDP Regional Bureau for Europe and Central Asia prepared the appendix on methodology. UNDP consultant Tatjana Peric extensively edited and expanded the report. UNDP would also like to thank all the interviewees and participants of the focus group sessions for their valuable input.

This study is also available at the UNDP Albania website:
www.undp.org.al

Copyright © 2006
By the UNDP Albania

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior permission.

Albanian translation: Marjola Xhelili
Cover design: "ALBDESIGN STUDIO"
The cover design is based on photographs taken by UNICEF and UNDP

Layout and print: "ALBDESIGN STUDIO"



Table of Contents

Introduction	5
Objectives and Methodology	8
I. Income and Living Standards	8
I.1 Main Sources of Income	9
I.2 Household Expenditures	12
I.3 Living and Housing Conditions	13
I.4 Basic Amenities	15
I.5 Access to Infrastructure	15
i. Water Supply	15
ii. Sanitation	16
iii. Electricity	17
iv. Communications	17
II. Health Status and Health Care	17
II.1 Roma Perceptions of Health and Health Care Standards	17
II.2 The Health of Women and Children	18
II.3 Causes of Poor Health	19
II.4 Poverty and HIV/AIDS	21
III. Education	21
III.1 Combating Illiteracy	22
III.2 Barriers to Education	24
i. Poverty-Related Barriers to Education	24
ii. Migration/Emigration	25
iii. The Educational Level of Parents	25
iv. Early Marriages	26
v. Language Barriers	26
vi. Proximity of Schools	26
vii. Discrimination by Teachers	27
IV. The Labour Market	27
IV.1 Traditional Socio-Occupational Identities	27
IV.2 Transition and Unemployment	28
IV.3 Long-term Unemployment	30
IV.4 Forms of Formal and Informal Labour	31
i. Trade in Used Clothes	31
ii. Agriculture	32
iii. Occasional Work	33
iv. Other Sources of Income	33
V. Social Capital and Political Representation	33
V.1 Structural Social Capital	34
V.2 Political Representation	35
VI. Conclusions and Recommendations	36
Bibliography	39
Appendix	41

Introduction

Roma are a unique ethnic group that has been residing on Albanian territory for centuries, while managing to retain their own language and culture. On the basis of historical and linguistic sources they emigrated from the northern parts of India in several consecutive waves from the ninth century (Silverman 1995) up to the 14th century. Some historical documents suggest that Roma came to southern Europe through Persia, the Caucasus, and the Byzantine Empire (Ringold and others 2003). Certain Romani tribes had probably come to the Balkans around the 14th century (Kolsti 1999) and have settled in Albania since the 15th century (Koinova 2000).

There are many differing tribes of Roma and the differences among these tribes derive from factors based on the route they took to arrive to Albania, their socio-economic state, skills, lifestyle, customs, linguistic dialects, to name a few. In Albania, the Romani tribes that have been identified in the following groups: the Meçkar, Karbuxh, Cergar (Rupane and Skodrara), Bamill and Kurtof (De Soto, Gedeshi 2002). The Meçkar are the largest of the Roma tribes and have established their livelihoods in Albania for centuries. They live primarily in the cities of Fier, Lushnje, Vlore, Tirana and Durrës and their traditional occupations consist of agriculture and farming (Milaj 1943). The Karbuxh tribe emigrated from Turkey to Greece, and later to Albania, during the migration wave of the 1920s (Hasluck 1938). Initially established in the city of Korça, the Karbuxh tribe later migrated to Pogradec, Elbasan, Tirana, Durrës and Fushë Krujë. They were mainly small merchants, and their traditional skills included horse trade, handicrafts and basket weaving. Meçkar and Karbuxh were recognized as popular musicians that performed at weddings and other ceremonies. The tribe of Cergar came from Montenegro and Serbia and established themselves in the Shkodër area during the 1920s (Kolsti 1991). They pursued activities primarily in horse trade and fortune telling (Taho 2002; A.T. 1943). In the central parts of Albania, the Cergar were also occupied with making handicraft products (such as brandy boilers, copper jugs, and sifts), which they sold at local villages. The Bamill tribe migrated from Ioannina (Greece) during the World War II and settled in Gjirokastër and Fier. They were tinsmiths, who also made coffee roasters, kettles, and pots. The Kurtof came to the city of Fier almost 60 years ago from the territory of today's Macedonia, and their professions included small trade and handicrafts. Traditionally Roma lived a nomadic lifestyle, but by the 1930s the majority of Roma tribes became gradually semi-nomadic or even completely sedentary (Hasluck 1938). Others settled in steady establishments during the period of socialism. During World War II some Roma fought in the National War of Liberation.

During the socialist period, improvements in housing, education, health care and social services of the Roma were evident. In the rural areas, they found employment in agriculture and farming. In the cities they worked in construction, public services and handicraft sectors (Taho 2002). Their status relative to the Albanian majority improved. Similar to the Ottoman times, Roma provided handicrafts, kept musical traditions alive, and served as important intermediaries between the urban and rural markets.

The Constitution of 1998 gave Roma the status of an ethno-linguistic minority, compared to the "national minority" status of ethnic Greeks, Montenegrins and Macedonians. Assessments on the numbers of Roma in Albania vary, due to the absence of ethnic data from the latest census in 2001, where the census forms did not include questions on one's ethnic or linguistic identity. Estimations of the Roma population vary from 10.000 to 120.000 (ERRC 1997) and from 80,000¹ to 150,000 Roma in Albania, which consists of numbers up to three per cent of the total population.² Compared to many

¹Project Strategy for the Improvement of Living Conditions of the Roma Minority, Tirana, April 2003, p. 21 (hereafter, "Roma Strategy").

²Information received from the Romani non-governmental organization Amaro Drom.

other Eastern and Central European countries, the percentage of Roma population to the total population in Albania is much smaller.

With the collapse and closure of state enterprises, and due to the lack of skills, low educational levels, and discrimination, Roma moved from a state of a relative well being to extreme poverty during the post-socialist transition period. They are currently the poorest and the most marginalized ethnic group in Albania (De Soto and others 2002). Studies have shown that their level of poverty is two times higher than among ethnic Albanians, while this condition is further deteriorating (De Soto and others 2005). The decline of Roma living standards during the post-communist transition has affected this group in a more significant way than it has for other groups of the population. This downfall has created a vicious circle of poverty, which produces illiteracy and low educational levels among Roma that further intensifies their marginalization in the society.

Since the 1990s international institutions, such as the Council of Europe, OSCE, various UN agencies, and the Soros Foundation, in all transitional economies of the region, have engaged in efforts through programmes and projects in reversing the declining socio-economic conditions of the Roma. One of the responses to the challenges posed by the alarming situation of Roma was the publication of a regional human development report on Roma in Central and Eastern Europe (Avoiding the Dependency Trap) in 2002 by the Regional Bureau of UNDP. This report analyzed the status of Roma from a human development perspective in five countries: Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia, and Romania. The report's recommendation to monitor poverty and other Millennium Development Goals³ (MDG)-related targets relevant for vulnerable groups, and Roma in particular, received broad support in the "Decade of Roma Inclusion" initiative. The Decade of Roma Inclusion grew out of the conference "Roma in an Expanding Europe: Challenges for the Future", where high level representatives from nine countries - Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia and Slovakia - pledged to close the gap in welfare and living conditions between Roma and the non-Roma in their countries, and to break the vicious circles of poverty and social exclusion.⁴ The national action plans (NAPs) that these governments subsequently designed and will implement during the Decade correspond to the MDGs with their emphasis on employment, education, health and housing, and also the crosscutting themes of poverty, discrimination and gender.

Whereas Albania is currently not a part of the Decade initiatives, the Government of Albania has shown intentions to join the initiative in the near future.⁵ Previously, in April 2003, the representatives of 11 ministries of the Albanian Government drafted the National Strategy for the Improvement of Living Conditions of the Roma Minority, in consultation with members of Romani

³ Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are a comprehensive human development agenda with its poverty alleviation goals linked to time-bound targets and quantitative indicators to assess performance in reaching these targets. The MDGs originate from the Millennium Declaration that was signed by 189 countries, including 147 heads of state, at the United Nations' Millennium Summit in New York in 2000. The eight MDGs provide time bound quantified indicators to help governments and other actors measure progress in reducing poverty and social exclusion. Goal 1 calls for halving the number of people living in absolute poverty by 2015. Goal 2 envisages reaching 100 percent primary school completion by 2015. Goal 3 supports gender equality, empowering women and eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education. Goal 4 calls for reducing child mortality by two thirds by 2015. Goal 5 aims to reduce maternal mortality by 75 percent. Goal 6 deals with combating HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis, and other communicable diseases. Goal 7 addresses environmental causes of poverty, while Goal 8 calls for stronger global partnerships for development. Specific targets and quantified indicators are associated with each of these goals. More information on the MDGs in Albania can be found at: <http://www.mdg.org.al>.

⁴ For more information on the Roma Decade, see: <http://www.romadecade.org>.

⁵ Open Society Foundation for Albania, "George Soros's visit to Albania", Tirana, 19 November 2005, available at: www.soros.al.

non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The Roma Strategy addresses five broad fields:

- education and training,
- cultural heritage and family,
- economy, employment, decrease of poverty and social protection,
- health and infrastructure,
- public order, justice, and civil administration.

The Strategy was praised for its comprehensiveness, and sensitivity for youth and gender issues; nevertheless, it was also criticized for its lack of a human rights-based approach, anti-discrimination focus, and community empowerment measures (MRG, 2005). Furthermore, the weak design of the monitoring and evaluation components of the Strategy were also noted (ECRI, 2005).

Additionally, the implementation of the Roma Strategy mainly falls short due to low financial commitments, and the actions taken as part of this process are very few.⁶ The Council of Europe convened a workshop on national minorities in Albania in September 2005, with the participation of the representatives of the Government and NGOs. One day of the workshop was devoted to the discussion of the implementation of the Roma Strategy, where most of the representatives of relevant ministries pointed at the lack of funding as the main problem.⁷ In 2006 the Roma Committee of the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities convened a series of meetings between the local authorities and the Roma, in order to collect information on the needs of the community. Despite the fact that Roma in Albania represent a smaller percentage of population in comparison with countries of Eastern and Central Europe,⁸ their increasing extreme poverty negatively affects the stability and social cohesion of the country. Additionally, the European Union, an entity where Albania aspires to integrate, conditioned the process of negotiations for association and stabilization with the fulfilment of certain political criteria, where the respect for the human rights of Roma takes an integral position. Albania has also signed and ratified the Framework Convention on National Minorities of the Council of Europe. As of the writing of this report, Albania still did not have comprehensive minority and antidiscrimination laws, though some antidiscrimination provisions were included in some of the specific legislation. Thus the human rights and social vulnerability of the Romani population of Albania become a task that needs urgent addressing.

⁶ UNDP Albania, "National Roma Day - A Platform for Development Advocates", available at: www.undp.org.al.

⁷ European Roma Rights Center, "Albanian Officials Meet to Discuss Strategy Regarding Romani Living Conditions", Roma Rights, No. 3-4/2005, Budapest, Hungary.

⁸ The Roma population in Europe is assessed to number 7 to 9 million people, which equals the population of Austria or Sweden, for instance. It is estimated that in some countries - possibly Bulgaria, Macedonia, Romania and Slovakia - Roma might represent 6 to 11 percent of the population.

Objectives and Methodology

The main objectives of this study are:

1. To increase the awareness of the central and local government, private sector and civil society on the economic and social rights and needs of the Roma community that have particularly emerged during the transition;
2. To assist the Government of Albania, UNDP and other potential donors to compile policies and specific programmes that can facilitate the inclusion of the Roma community in the Albanian society, through the findings and the quantitative and qualitative data presented in this study.

While this study reflects on some aspects of the socio-economic, cultural, institutional and historical state of the Roma community in Albania, the findings of this study are mainly based on the analysis of the quantitative data from a survey conducted for the UNDP at the beginning of 2005, with 450 Romani families and their 2479 members in 15 Albanian cities: Delvinë, Sarandë, Gjirokastër, Fier, Lushnje, Peqin, Berat, Kuçovë, Elbasan, Pogradec, Korçë, Devoll, Tirana, Krujë and Lezhë. This survey also included 450 non-Romani families and their 1876 members that lived in close proximity of the minority community.⁹ In this way, and for the first time, the results of the survey provide a way to directly analyze and compare the quantitative data of the Roma population with those of the non-Romani population, at a national level. The questionnaire included over 100 questions collecting quantitative information related to the living conditions, employment, education, health, infrastructure, social capital, and so on.¹⁰

Furthermore, the UNDP survey in Albania was a part of a greater initiative. Namely, the same comprehensive vulnerability survey was conducted by the UNDP in ten other countries and regions - Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, and Kosovo. Regional data compiled by using the same methodology creates the possibility that Roma-related quantitative data can be compared not only with the non-Romani population in the respective countries, but also between the countries as well. While the survey was regionally coordinated by the GALLUP regional office in Sofia, the Albanian section of the survey was executed by the Centre for Social Surveys Index Albania. The full UNDP Vulnerable Groups Dataset for all the survey countries, including Albania, is available at: <http://vulnerability.undp.sk>.

This study also refers to the existing literature on the history, economy, politics and culture of the Roma community in Albania and in several other countries of Central and Eastern Europe; all the sources used are presented in the bibliography. The publication was also enriched with the analysis of some qualitative data taken from interviews and focus groups that had taken place during previous research undertaken by the Centre for Economic and Social Studies.

I. Income and Living Standards

The income and living standards of the Roma community have severely deteriorated during the post-socialist transition. The average monthly income per capita for the Roma is around 3.3 times less than for

⁹ Hereafter: "non-Roma." In the case of the Albania UNDP survey, "non-Romani" means 97 percent Albanian, but also includes ethnic Greeks, Macedonians and Bulgarians.

¹⁰ More information on the methodology can be found in the Appendix to this report.

the non-Romani population, and many Roma families live in extreme poverty. The survey results suggest that the main sources of income for Roma in Albania are casual work and self-employment. In addition to their insufficient income, many families suffer from poor housing conditions, sanitation and infrastructure, which effectively prevents them from participating extensively in public life.

I.1 Main Sources of Income

According to the UNDP survey results, the main sources of income for Romani families are: self-employment (the trade of used clothes, performing music, the recycling of cans and scrap iron), casual work (construction and other menial jobs) and small business, which altogether represent 72 percent of the income sources. Another 13 percent of respondents' households receive income from pensions, social assistance or employment compensation, whereas remittances and gifts slightly exceed two percent. Agricultural activities are a source of income for five percent of Romani households, demonstrating that agriculture has a mainly subsistence character. A small share of households also acquire income through informal activities, such as begging and fortune telling (two percent).

Table 1. Sources of income for Romani and non-Romani households (%)

No.	Source of income	Non-Roma	Roma
1.	All kinds of salary and earnings	79.9	72.5
2.	Old-age pensions	6.3	6.0
3.	Disability pensions	0.5	1.3
4.	State assistance for children	*	0.7
5.	Unemployment, poverty or other social benefits	0.3	5.4
6.	Stipends and scholarships	0.5	*
7.	Sale of agricultural products	5.2	5.4
8.	Money gained from interest, capital or debtors	1.4	0
9.	Earnings from the sale of personal belongings or recycling materials	*	2.7
10.	Money from informal activities (fortune telling, begging, etc.)	0.5	2.0
11.	Remittances, or gifts from friends and relatives	5.2	2.7
12.	Aid from NGOs, charity contributions, etc.	0.3	1.3
	Total	100	100

Source: UNDP Vulnerable Groups Dataset, 2005.

Because their educational qualifications are low, as they mainly work only occasionally and in the informal sector, and also due to discrimination in employment-related procedures, the average income for Roma is considerably lower than that of the non-Romani population. The UNDP survey data show that the average income from any source of a member of a Romani household in the month prior to the survey was 68 EUR, compared to the 174.5 EUR for the non-Romani population living in the proximity of Roma. Additionally, the monthly income of 51 percent of Roma does not exceed 50 EUR, whereas a half of the non-Romani population earn incomes over 150 EUR per month (Table 2).

Table 2. The total amount of monthly income from any source

No.	The total amount of income	Non-Roma	Roma
1.	Up to 30 EUR	5	24
2.	31 to 50	6	27
3.	51 to 75	8	13
4.	76 to100	14	17
5.	101 to150	16	7
6.	Over 151	49	9
7.	Refused to respond/Don't know	2	3
	Average	174.5	68

Source: UNDP Vulnerable Groups Dataset, 2005

Due to low income, whole segments of the Albanian society live in poverty. However, in the case of Roma, poverty is multi-dimensional, extreme and often chronic. Measuring poverty is normally done against set poverty-related values. The World Bank uses two poverty rates for the region of south east Europe, including Albania: the “extreme” poverty rate, i.e. the share of persons living on less than 2.15 USD per day in purchasing power parity (PPP) terms, and the “absolute” poverty rate, i.e. the share of persons living on less than 4.30 USD per day in PPP terms. The national poverty lines have been set at the values shown in Table 3. Yet, it is important to note that – regardless of the poverty measure one decides to utilise – significantly higher poverty risk among Roma is clearly evident in comparison with the non-Roma. For instance, the results of the UNDP vulnerability survey showed that poverty rates among Roma in Albania rank notably higher when applying any poverty measure:

Table 3: Poverty rates

POVERTY RATES		
	Non-Roma	Roma
4.30 USD (PPP) PER DAY – WORLD BANK ABSOLUTE POVERTY LINE		
Income-based poverty line	14	72
Expenditure-based poverty line	22	78
Poverty gap – income-based poverty line	5	32
2.15 USD (PPP) PER DAY – WORLD BANK EXTREME POVERTY LINE		
Income-based poverty line	4	29
Expenditure-based poverty line	5	39
Poverty gap – income-based poverty line	1	10
NATIONAL POVERTY LINES		
Extreme poverty rate income-based (below 3,047 Leks/25 EUR per month)	3	24
Complex poverty rate income-based (below 4,891 Leks/40 EUR per month)	7	50
Relative poverty rate income-based (below 60% median per capita consumption - 4,019 Leks/33 EUR pm)	5	39
Extreme poverty rate expenditure-based (below 3,047 Leks/25 EUR per month)	4	32
Complex poverty rate expenditure-based (below 4,891 Leks/40 EUR per month)	10	58
Relative poverty rate expenditure-based (below 60% median per capita consumption - 4,019 Leks/33 EUR pm)	6	48

Source: UNDP Vulnerable Groups Dataset, 2005

The incidence of hunger could be seen as one of the indicators for the level of material poverty among Roma in Albania. In the UNDP survey, the respondents were asked whether in the last month they or any members of their family went to bed hungry because they lacked money for buying basic food. According to the survey results, 54 percent Roma answered with “never”; however 16 percent answered “once”; another 16 percent said “2-3 times,” and nine percent answered “4 times or more”. The survey results also show a clear correlation between the incidence of hunger and the size of family (Table 4). In households with many children, there is on average a higher number of households where members experienced hunger. Consequently, many Romani children living in large families might suffer from malnutrition, a condition that has negative effects on their health and education. It is also important to note that in the non-Roma community, 98 percent of households never experienced this phenomenon, while only one percent responded with “once.”

Table 4. “In the past month, did you or anyone in your family ever go to bed hungry because you could not afford enough food for them?” (%)

No.		Average	No. of children	With 1-2 children	3-4 children	More than 5 children
1.	Never	54	63.2	58.9	43.3	17.6
2.	Once	16	19.5	16.4	13.4	0
3.	2-3 times	16	9.2	14.6	22.8	29.4
4.	4 times or more	9	5.7	6.4	12.6	35.3
5.	Refused/Don't know	5	2.3	3.6	7.9	17.6
6.	Total	100	100	100	100	100

Source: UNDP Vulnerable Groups Dataset, 2005

The survey results show that poverty resulting in hunger in Romani families also has a territorial dimension: it is more pronounced in rural than urban areas (Table 5).

Table 5. “In the past month, did you or anyone in your family ever go to bed hungry because you could not afford enough food for them?” (%)

		Rural	Urban	Capital
1.	Never	38.1	60.2	54.4
2.	Once	7.9	20.4	8.8
3.	2-3 times	30.9	8.6	23.5
4.	4 times or more	16.8	7.4	2.9
5.	Refused/Don't know	6.2	13.0	10.3
6.	Total	100	100	100

Source: UNDP Vulnerable Groups Dataset, 2005

In addition to the real occurrence of hunger, 22 percent of the interviewed Romani families considered “hunger” as the most potential threat that they could face, and there is a stark difference between their perception of threat and that of the rest of the population (Table 6). In addition to often not being able to provide for food, the food diet of an average Romani family is also poor and not diversified (De Soto and others, 2005).

Table 6. “Hunger” as a potential threat (grades from 1 to 5, in %)

No.	Assessment with a score	Non-Roma	Roma
1.	Score 5 (highest level of threat)	1	22
2.	Score 4	4	19
3.	Score 3	8	20
4.	Score 2	23	18
5.	Score 1 (lowest level of threat)	62	20
6.	Refused/Don't know	2	*
	Total	100	100

Source: UNDP Vulnerable Groups Dataset, 2005

I.2 Household Expenditures

According to the UNDP survey data, the average total monthly expenditure of a Romani household is 123.8 EUR or around 2.5 times lower than the total expenditure of a non-Romani household (305 EUR). The largest part of the expenditures is spent on food, and very small amounts are further spent on education, health care, transportation and leisure. The income from pensions (six percent), social assistance (5.4 percent), the invalidity benefits (1.3 percent) and child benefits (0.7 percent), represent 13.4 percent of the total income.

On average, Romani households monthly spend 67.5 percent of their expenditures on food, compared to 54 percent of the non-Romani households of the same size. However the actual value of this amount for Roma is only 83.6 EUR, while for non-Roma it is 156.9 EUR. Having a smaller disposable income to spend, an average Romani family has a higher share of food expenditures than a non-Roma, two thirds compared to one half, whereas in real value a Romani family consumes almost two times less than a family from the non-Romani population (Table 7).

Table 7. Household Expenditures

No.	Expenditures	Non-Roma		Roma	
		Value in EUR	%	Value in EUR	%
1.	Food	157	54	83.6	68
2.	Alcohol and cigarettes	12.6	4	11.0	9
3.	Clothes and shoes	36.2	12	5.2	4
4.	Housing/utilities	38.3	13	6.0	5
5.	Medicines and medical services	8.5	3	3.7	3
6.	Household consumer goods	13.1	5	6.0	5
7.	Transportation	12.8	4	3.9	3
8.	Visits to cinemas, cafes, etc.	14.5	5	4.4	4
	Total	292.9	100	123.8	100

Source: UNDP Vulnerable Groups Dataset, 2005

Also, while it is acknowledged that the health of Roma is seriously endangered by their grave living conditions, Romani households are able to spend only four EUR per month for medicines and medical services. Money spent for clothes and shoes represent four percent of the family expenses, or only 5.2 EUR per month. This is the largest discrepancy in the household expenditures of Roma and non-Roma in Albania, as an average non-Romani family spends three times more in terms of percentage, and seven times more in EUR. In this respect, it is important to note that the lack of adequate clothing and footwear is sometimes cited as one of the reasons why Romani children drop out of schools.

I.3 Living and Housing Conditions

Albanian Roma live in settled communities and locations. The Meçkar tribe lives mainly in rural areas, with a small number of families settled in cities. The Karbuxh, Cergar, Kurtof and Bamill tribes live mainly in the periphery of cities, in overpopulated areas without appropriate infrastructure. According to the UNDP survey data, 69 percent of Romani families live in neighbourhoods mainly populated by Roma, and 20 percent live in ethnically mixed neighbourhoods. Eleven percent of Romani households live in areas where they are an ethnic minority. In Gjirokastër, Roma live in the neighbourhood called Zinxhiraj, in the periphery of the city. In Elbasan, some families from the Karbuxh tribe live in Rrapishtë, on the outskirts of the city. In Berat and Tirana, poor Romani families live in huts by the river. Some Roma tribes that had previously lived a nomadic lifestyle during the socialist period were now established in settled locations.

According to the UNDP household survey data, during the post-socialist transition, notably the years 1995-2001, 14 percent of Romani families migrated, mainly for economic reasons (92 percent), safety and security concerns (three percent), and due to political unrest (two percent). In comparison, a higher share of non-Roma surveyed (19 percent) also changed places of residence in this period. The majority of Romani households – 84 percent – migrated out of rural areas, whereas 14 percent migrated from the cities. For instance, Romani families currently in Fushë Krujë migrated for economic reasons from the village of Halilaj. In another situation, following the breakdown of law and order in 1997, Romani families from Berati migrated to the neighbourhood of Rrapishtë in the city of Elbasan.

During the transition, the housing conditions deteriorated for many Romani families. The families that left villages and settled in the periphery of several cities built shacks or other types of simple housing, and live without the necessary infrastructure. Some of the Roma who sold their houses in the period 1994 – 1996 and lost their money after they had deposited it in pyramidal firms now live in shacks or in dilapidated buildings previously owned by state enterprises.

Roma are not always owners of the dwellings in which they live, more often than the non-Roma. Eighty-three percent of Romani households are owners of their own dwelling, compared to 94 percent of non-Roma; most Romani homeowners had inherited this property in the early 1990s through the privatization of the housing sector. Another aspect which indicates a situation specific for the Romani population is the fact that five percent of Romani households live in unregulated areas (compared to only one percent non-Roma), and four percent of them live in collective camps, whereas this is the case with only a negligible number of non-Romani households. Reportedly, in January 2005, housing demolitions by the Construction Police in Tirana left eighteen Romani families homeless, without the provision of alternative accommodation.¹¹ Obviously, serious efforts need to be urgently invested in regulating the areas where Romani households live.

Though the ownership of one's dwellings is considerably an important element of one's security net, many of these dwellings are actually in a very poor state. The discontentment with the housing conditions is evident in both rural and urban areas. For instance, at Kthesa e Ariut, in the municipality of Sukth (Durrës), some Romani families of the Cergar tribe live in the settings of the old poultry barns. The UNDP survey results indicate a similar state of affairs in other locations: 20 percent of Romani households (and only one percent of the non-Romani population) reside in ruined housing, slums or huts (Table 8).

¹¹ European Roma Rights Centre, "Police Violence against Roma during Housing Demolitions", Roma Rights, No. 2/2005, Budapest.

Table 8. External evaluation of the household's dwelling

No.	External evaluation of the dwelling	Non-Roma	Roma
1.	Apartments in buildings	43	17
2.	New house in a good condition	48	19
3.	Older house in a relatively good condition	8	45
4.	Ruined house or slum	0	7
5.	Hut	1	13
	Total	100	100

Source: UNDP Vulnerable Groups Dataset, 2005

One indicator of the low quality of Romani households housing conditions is clearly the number of rooms and the size of the housing area: as much as 80 percent of Romani families live in dwellings made up of one or two rooms only. At the same time, only 30 percent of non-Roma live in spaces of that size.

"We are twelve persons in my family, I, my wife, my daughter and my grandson, my son and my daughter in law with their children. They all live here, in this room. Our main problem is the house; we all sleep here in this room". Arbeni from Korça

An average dwelling of a Romani family has 1.9 rooms, compared to 3.1 rooms among non-Romani households (Table 9). Statistically, 2.9 Romani persons share one room, whereas for the rest of the population this indicator stands at 1.3 persons per room.

Table 9. "How many rooms does your household have in the dwelling you currently occupy?" (%)

No.	Number of rooms	Non-Roma	Roma
1.	1 room	6	39
2.	2 rooms	24	41
3.	3 rooms	41	15
4.	4 rooms	21	2
5.	5 rooms and above	9	3
	Average number of rooms	3.1	1.9

Source: UNDP Vulnerable Groups Dataset, 2005

According to the survey data, the largest share of Romani families (45 percent) live in dwellings with a total area of 50m², compared to only seven percent non-Roma living in such circumstances. Furthermore, 29 percent of Romani households have a living space of up to 75m²; 26 percent of households live in dwellings larger than 75m². The average size of a Romani dwelling is 61.8m², compared to 97.2 m² for the non-Romani. Statistically, a person occupies 11.2m² for Roma and 23.4 m² for the non-Roma.

Table 10. "How many square meters in total is the size of your current dwelling?"

No.	Area	Non-Roma	Roma (%)
1.	Up to 50 m ²	7	45
2.	51-75 m ²	26	29
3.	76-100 m ²	36	20
4.	Over 101 m ²	32	6
5.	Refused/don't know	0	*
6.	Average floorage (m²)	97.2	61.8

Source: UNDP Vulnerable Groups Dataset, 2005

In addition, only 59 percent of Romani households own a bed for each member of the family. Consequently, some members of the family have to sleep on floors or share beds.

"I live with my husband and 6 children. I have also my granddaughter; my daughter has been separated from her husband. I live without social assistance ... What are our problems? We have no house or bread. Four people sleep on the couch, two on one side and two on the other. The others sleep on the other couch". Shpresa, a Roma woman from Korça

I.4 Basic Amenities

When it comes to basic household facilities, the ownership of durable household goods, such as appliances or furniture, the numbers are lower among Romani households. A very small share of Romani families had a functioning washing machine (17 percent), compared to 86 percent non-Roma, and 47 percent owned a refrigerator. Around 85 percent of the families own a TV, and only three percent own a car. Generally, Romani families own much less household equipment than the non-Roma (Table 11). During the previous year, only 16 percent of Romani families (compared to 32 percent of the rest of the population) could afford to buy some household appliances, and those who did spent 358 EUR on average on the entire expenditure, compared to 2767 EUR for 32 percent of non-Romani families.

Table 11. Ownership of basic amenities (%)

No.	Durable goods	Non-Roma	Roma
1.	Radio	90	85
2.	Refrigerator	98	47
3.	Oven	83	56
4.	TV	99	85
5.	Telephone	51	6
6.	Car	29	3
7.	CD	26	2
8.	Computer	15	*
9.	Internet connection	6	0
10.	Satellite dish	22	1
11.	Cell phone	84	15
12.	Washing machine	86	17
13.	Bed for each member of the family	98	59
14.	30 + books	72	11
15.	Power generator	5	1

Source: UNDP Vulnerable Groups Dataset, 2005

I.5 Access to Infrastructure

i. Water Supply

The lack of adequate water supply is a serious problem for a number of Romani households. The survey data state that only 28 percent of Romani families have piped potable water inside their dwelling, vis-à-vis 97 percent of the non-Roma. Furthermore, 48 percent of Romani families are supplied with piped water out in their yards or gardens, and 38 percent through public taps. The provision of water is most difficult for the families that reside at the periphery of the city: eight percent of such Romani households are provided with potable water from covered wells (boreholes) and nine percent from the surface water from springs.

"There is no potable water; therefore we have opened several covered wells in some places. However, the quality of water in these wells is not good, because the water is mixed with sand and other residue". *Bujar, a Romani man living in Fushë Krujë*

In many cases the use of unchecked sources of water can result in infections. Only four percent of Romani families, compared to 38 percent of the rest of the population, buys bottled water. Consequently, diseases caused by poor sanitation constitute a threat to Romani population (2.6), and the same perception applies to the non-Roma, on a scale from the lowest level of threat equal to 1, to the highest level of 5.

Table 12. Sources of potable water (%)

No.	Source of potable water	Non-Roma	Roma
1.	Piped water inside the dwelling	97	28
2.	Piped water in the garden/yard	21	48
3.	Public tap	10	38
4.	Covered well or borehole	15	8
5.	Surface water from springs	4	9
6.	Rainwater	1	8
7.	Tankers / trucks	1	0
8.	Buying bottles of mineral water	38	4

Source: UNDP Vulnerable Groups Dataset, 2005

ii. Sanitation

The presence of a toilet inside the house is another useful indicator to assess the living conditions of Romani families. According to the survey data, only 28 percent have a toilet inside their house, in comparison to 92 percent of the rest of the population. As much as 71 percent of Romani families only have a latrine.

Table 13. Sanitary conditions (%)

No.		Non-Roma	Roma
1.	A kitchen in the dwelling	97	45
2.	Toilet inside the dwelling	92	28
3.	Latrine	22	71
4.	Sewage inside the dwelling	84	28
5.	Shower or bathroom inside the dwelling	91	16

Source: UNDP Vulnerable Groups Dataset, 2005

Only sixteen percent of Romani families, like 91 percent of the non-Romani population, have a shower or a bathroom inside their house. The absence of toilets in many Roma locations renders the maintenance of personal hygiene more difficult, and unregulated sewage can also cause the spread of infections and generally brings higher health risks, especially in a situation where 72 percent of Romani households do not have a sewage system, compared to only 16 percent of non-Roma.

"[Romani children] are not clean, because they have no water in their house to get washed up!"
A teacher in a Tirana school

iii. Electricity

The absence of electricity is another prime concern for Romani families. The household survey data shows that 94 percent of Romani families, in comparison with 100 percent of non-Roma, are regularly connected to a network of electricity supply. Almost 62 percent of the families use electricity to cook, and 51 percent use it for heating. However the average number of the service hours in which electricity is provided is reduced in all of Albania; additionally, in many areas the output of electrical supply is very low, and it does not allow for the use of some household appliances. Another difficulty to surmount is the inability of paying electricity bills: according to the survey, eight percent of Romani households have not paid their electricity bills for an average period of 18.8 months, in the average amount of 79 EUR. Comparatively, four percent of non-Romani households have unpaid electricity bills, yet those who do owe them for a slightly longer period (19.6 months) and in considerably higher average amounts (326 EUR).

iv. Communications

It is also important to note that the modern means of communication remain out of reach for a vast majority of Albanian Roma. In most locations populated by Roma, especially in rural and suburban areas, there are no telephone services. According to the survey, only six percent of Romani families have a telephone, and the majority of them live in urban areas. The absence of fixed telephone lines has prompted many families to obtain cell phones – owned by 15 percent of Romani households – however this service is notably more expensive. Most strikingly, just one out of 450 Romani households in the survey owned a computer, and not a single family had a functioning connection to the Internet.

II. Health Status and Health Care

The official data on the status of the health of Roma in Albania are partial and scarce. It is also considered that data from empirical observations might not show the actual medical state, due to the low level of health awareness and the limited aspirations of Romani respondents. It is, in any way, certain that the state of health of Roma has deteriorated to a greater extent than for the rest of the population in the period of post-socialist transition (De Soto and others, 2002). Generally, in Eastern and Central European countries, it is estimated that the average life expectancy for Roma is 10 years lower than for the non-Romani population (Ringold and others, 2003). Meanwhile, the study and the monitoring of the health state of Roma have a specific importance, as relevant health indicators stand at the focus of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) 4, 5 and 6.¹²

II.1 Roma Perceptions of Health and Health Care Standards

According to the survey data, only five percent of Romani persons interviewed assess that their health is much better than in the previous year, 10 percent assess it as “good up to a point,” and 75 percent assess it to be the same. In terms of negative comparisons, nine percent consider their health to be “worse up to a point,” and one percent said that it was “much worse.” When compared to the same sort of assessment by the non-Romani population, the perception of the state of health of the Romani population is visibly lower.

¹² MDG 4, “Reducing child mortality” sets the target of reducing the under-age-five mortality rate by two-thirds between 1990 and 2015. MDG 5, “Improve maternal health” sets the target of reducing the maternal mortality rate by three-quarters between 1990 and 2015. Goal 6, “Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases” sets two targets: to halt and reverse the spread of HIV/AIDS by 2015, and to halt and reverse the spread of malaria and other diseases by 2015. More information on the MDGs in Albania can be found at: <http://www.mdg.org.al>.

Table 14. The health of the household member compared to one year ago (%)

No.	The health of the household member compared to a year ago	Non-Roma	Roma
1.	Much better	26	5
2.	Good up to a point	19	10
3.	Same	50	75
4.	Worse up to a point	4	9
5.	Much worse	*	1
6.	Refused/Don't know	*	0
	Total	100	100

Source: UNDP Vulnerable Groups Dataset, 2005

The health-related data collected in the survey is based on the results of subjective evaluations of the state of health of the person interviewed. This could serve as an explanation why the data obtained through subjective assessment might differ from the objective opinions of medical experts, especially in the case of Roma health.

Among the respondents who declared that they suffered from chronic illnesses, which was 18 percent of Roma and 15 percent of non-Roma, the most common chronic illnesses reported were high blood pressure (30 percent non-Roma, and 12 percent Roma), followed by other cardiovascular diseases (12 percent non-Roma, seven percent Roma), and bronchitis and emphysema (six percent Roma, seven percent non-Roma). However, significant differences lay in the field of pulmonary diseases and asthma, that affected 10 percent of Roma with chronic illnesses and only two percent of non-Roma in this category. In such cases, the higher incidence of these diseases is in direct correlation to their substandard housing conditions. Additionally, the most serious sickness that the respondents encountered in the previous twelve months was influenza, with 40 percent of both surveyed groups, followed by catching a cold (15 percent Roma, 14 percent non-Roma).

II.2 The Health of Women and Children

In terms of health risks, children and women are the two most vulnerable groups in the Romani population. Although the official data for infant mortality in Albania is not disaggregated by ethnicity, the information received in interviews and focus group sessions indicate that infant mortality reaches much higher levels among Roma.¹³ Children from Romani communities also stand a higher risk of diseases, ones that are normally preventable due to the lack of vaccination. Among the children aged 14 and under who were surveyed in the UNDP research, only 76 percent of Roma, compared to 93 percent of the non-Roma, were confirmed to having been immunized against polio, diphtheria, tetanus and whooping cough. Comparatively, in 2004, Albanian national averages for one-year-olds immunized against polio, diphtheria, tetanus and whooping cough with the DPT1 vaccine were 98 percent and 97 percent with the following DPT3 re-vaccine.¹⁴

¹³ During the transition period, the infant mortality in Albania declined from 35.4 per 1000 newborns in the year 1993 to 17.5 in the year 2001 (Statistical Yearbook, 1993-2001, INSTAT 2003). In the year 2004, infant mortality stood at 16.5 per 1000 newborns (World Bank, Albania Data Profile, available at: www.worldbank.org/al).

¹⁴ UNICEF, "Albania: Statistics", available at: <http://www.unicef.org/albania>.

Table 15. Vaccination of Romani and non-Romani children (%)

No.	Vaccinated	Non-Roma	Roma
1.	Yes	93	76
2.	No	3	20
3.	Refused/Don't know	4	3
	Total	100	100

Source: UNDP Vulnerable Groups Dataset, 2005

Among those children who were not vaccinated, an alarming count of 37 percent Roma, compared to zero cases among non-Roma, stated that it was the case due to their lack of adequate information. Additionally, 19 percent did not consider vaccination important. There is evidently a need for awareness raising among Romani communities on this particular issue of child health care. In relation to that, many sources also highlight the need for stronger awareness raising on general health concerns among Roma. Another interesting aspect of the vaccination problem is that the lack of valid documents was the reason why 26 percent of Romani children were not vaccinated. Comparatively, this was the case with only six out of 11 non-vaccinated children from 450 non-Romani households.

When it comes to the reproductive health of Romani woman, it has notably worsened during the transition period, and mainly due to poor living conditions, malnutrition, multiple births, abortions, inadequate access to healthcare, and a low level of health awareness. During their pregnancy, Romani women reportedly also have a higher rate of complications than women from the non-Romani population. Knowledge and application of contraceptive means is at a very low level for Romani women in Albania. A qualitative study showed that only 46 percent of Roma are familiar with a standard birth control method, and 10 percent use it. Consequently, the level of abortions is much higher in such circumstances, as it is undertaken as a form of contraception: the study stated that 56 percent of Romani women had an abortion, whereas 77 percent have had two or more abortions. The majority of those abortions were done with the help of a doctor, although 17 percent of Romani women have had a self-induced abortion (De Soto and others, 2005).

II.3 Causes of Poor Health

The poor state of health in many Romani families is explained by the inability of dealing with the cost of health care, malnutrition, the absence of necessary infrastructure, and limited access to health care facilities and services.

Malnutrition: In addition to being related to many chronic illnesses, malnutrition also adversely affects the immune system. According to empirical observations, the nutritional diet of Romani families is very meagre, with an insufficient intake of vegetables, dairy products, grain and meat (De Soto and others, 2005). According to the UNDP survey data, an average Romani family uses on average 15.3 EUR per capita for food per month, compared to 37 EUR per capita of a family from the non-Roma population. As much as 16 percent of the surveyed Romani families do not eat sufficient amounts of food one time in a month, whereas 25 percent more of those interviewed lack enough food to eat more than one time in a month.

The absence of appropriate infrastructure: The overpopulation of locations where Roma reside and the lack of appropriate infrastructure, such as the provision of potable water and adequate sewage system, make the Romani community more vulnerable to health risks. The Roma are exposed to infectious diseases, skin infections, lung illnesses, toxic infections, to a greater extent than is the case with the majority of the

population. Hospital sources reported cases of hepatitis and tuberculosis within Romani communities. Furthermore Roma are considered to be a population at risk from tuberculosis in Albania.⁷

Limited access to medical services: The quality of medical services provided at Albanian health centres, especially in the villages and in the peripheries of urban areas where Roma reside, has deteriorated notably during the transition period. Sometimes the geographic distance of facilities creates obstacles in access to health care as well. For instance, the nearest primary medical centre was located 1.5 km away on average for Romani families, compared to 0.9 km for non-Roma. This is mostly due to the fact that Roma very often live in marginalized and secluded settlements away from any meaningful infrastructure. In addition, health centres are plagued by a lack of qualified medical personnel and the necessary supplies. Roma seek medical assistance less often than non-Roma. The survey data indicates that only 38 percent of Roma, compared to 59 percent of non-Roma, consulted a doctor when they were sick in 2005. Additionally, only 40 percent of Roma have a family doctor, which is the case for 73 percent of non-Roma in the survey.

Table 16. “Have you consulted a doctor [for sicknesses encountered in the past 12 months]?” (%)

No.	Consultation with doctor	Non-Roma	Roma
1.	Yes	59	38
2.	No	33	59
3.	Don't know/Refused	8	3
	Total	100	100

Source: UNDP Vulnerable Groups Dataset, 2005

For some Roma, the lack of valid personal documents and medical IDs also presents a concern in this respect. Four percent of Roma were denied medical treatment because they did not have proper documents, compared to less than one percent of such cases among non-Roma. Additionally, according to the information received in interviews and focus group sessions, the majority of Roma do not contribute to the health insurance system. A Romani family can monthly afford to spend only 3.7 EUR on average for medicines and medical services, compared to 8.5 EUR for the non-Romani population.

In such circumstances, it is obvious that the cost of medical services and medicines constitute one of the primary barriers for the health care of many Romani families. While the public health care system is free in Albania, informal payments to doctors are nevertheless considered common, and for most Romani families such payments are difficult to afford. Many households also cannot afford to purchase the necessary medicines. According to the survey data, 41 percent of Romani families experienced a situation where they could not afford to buy prescribed medicines for a household member in the past 12 months, compared to 12 percent non-Roma in the same circumstances.

The survey results also include evidence of a different treatment of Roma by medical professionals in health clinics and hospitals. Thirty-five Romani persons interviewed stated that they were separated from the majority population during their hospital treatment, while this was the case with only one person of non-Romani ethnicity. In the case of Roma, there are also indications that sometimes there is not enough trust in state institutions and medical professionals, which results in some Roma choosing not to seek medical assistance due to the possibility of being discriminated. When asked how they would estimate the threat of being denied access to health care provision, four percent of Roma considered that denied

¹⁵ Government of Albania, Albania National Report on Progress Towards Achieving the Millennium Development Goals, Tirana: Government of Albania, 2004, p. 45.

access was a threat of high risk (compared to two percent non-Roma). On an ascending scale from 1 to 5, the overall estimate for this threat was 2.3 for Romani households.

II.4 Poverty and HIV/AIDS

Information on drug abuse and sexually transmitted diseases in the Romani community is scarce and often fragmented and existing materials show that there is not much awareness of HIV/AIDS risks. For instance, according to a UNICEF study from 2002, conducted among 74 young Romani persons aged 11-20 in four Albanian cities (Tirana, Vlorë, Fier and Korçë), 16 percent tried drugs at least once, though not intravenously.¹⁶ Sixty-nine of them were sexually active, however only seven percent of respondents always used condoms. Furthermore, 28 percent of the sexually active young Roma provided sex in return for money, drugs or other favours, indicating that their social and economic status puts them under pressure to engage in high risk behaviour. It is also considered that prostitution and trafficking of Romani women and children have been on the rise during the transition period. Though there is much work on this issue today, some researchers blamed the initial lack of interest in tackling the problem of trafficking children from Albania into Greece on popular beliefs that most trafficked children were Romani.¹⁷

III. Education

After World War II up to the beginning of the post-communist transition in the year 1991, the education system in Albania was extensive.¹⁸ During mid-1980s, 90 percent of students completed their mandatory education, and 74 percent of them continued their high school education (INSTAT 2002). In 1990, the net primary enrolment ratio was 95.1 percent of the relevant age group.¹⁹ However, the level and the quality of education in Albania declined in the post-communist transition. School attendance has fallen, drop out rates have increased, and widespread illiteracy has reappeared, especially in areas populated by socially vulnerable groups (De Soto and others 2002, Dudwick and Shahriari 2000).

This is particularly discernible in the case of Roma, as a marginalized group in the Albanian society. In comparison with the non-Romani population, the Roma population have experienced higher illiteracy rates and more generally there was a rapid decline in the education of the Roma population. As education is directly related to professional qualifications and answering the labour market demands, its deterioration has gravely contributed to high unemployment and extreme poverty of many Romani families.

¹⁶ UNICEF, "Assessment of HIV/AIDS Among Young Roma People", Tirana, Albania, August 2002, available at: http://www.unicef.org/albania/media_742.html.

¹⁷ Terre des Hommes Albania, UNICEF and the Oak Foundation, The Trafficking of Albanian Children into Greece, Tirana, Albania, January 2003, p. 7.

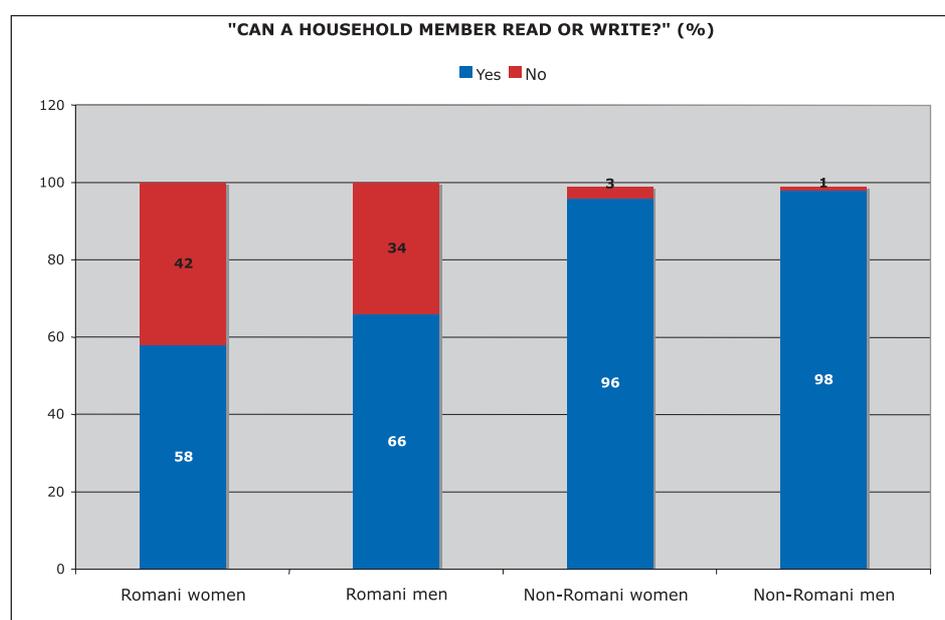
¹⁸ At the end of the World War II, the level of illiteracy in Albania reached 80 percent, whereas in rural areas it reached 90-95 percent.

¹⁹ World Bank, Albania Data Profile, available at: www.worldbank.org/al.

III.1 Combating Illiteracy

The education and literacy²⁰ levels among Roma in Albania fall well behind national averages, according to the UNDP survey results. The average literacy rate of Romani survey respondents is a mere 62 percent, comparatively the literacy rate of non-Roma was 97 percent, while the national Albanian adult literacy rate for 2004 was 98.7 percent.²¹ Data disaggregated by sex shows lower literacy rates among women: only 58 percent of surveyed Romani women were literate, compared to 66 percent of Romani men, or 96 percent of non-Romani women and 98 percent of Romani men. In this respect, it would be very important to launch literacy programmes for Roma, especially for Romani women.

Graph 1. Illiteracy rates



The highest literacy rates, 77 percent, are found among Roma in the age group 30-49, who received their education during the massive efforts to eradicate illiteracy during the socialist period. It is also partly due to the former state policy that settled the families of some Romani tribes – mainly Karbuxh, Cergar and Bamill – in a permanent location, which limited their previous nomadic lifestyle and enforced the mandatory enrolment of children. However, the Roma levels of literacy have plunged since then and this is particularly the case for women. To illustrate Roma illiteracy rates reach as much as 55 percent in the age group under 15, compared to only two percent among the non-Roma of the same age group (Table 17).

²⁰ For the purposes of this survey, literacy was defined as the share of persons over the age of 15 who can read and write.

²¹ World Bank, Albania Data Profile, available at: www.worldbank.org/al.

Table 17. The levels of illiteracy for Roma (R) and non-Roma (NR) according to age groups (%)

No.	Can read and write	< 15		15 – 29		30 – 49		>50 yrs old		Average	
		NR	R	NR	R	NR	R	NR	R	NR	R
1.	Yes	96	45	100	68	99.6	77	92	46	97	62
2.	No	2	55	0	32	0.4	23	8	54	2	38
3.	Don't know	2	0	0	0	0	0	*	0	1	0
	Total	100	100	100	100						

Source: UNDP Vulnerable Groups Dataset, 2005

Levels of illiteracy also vary in different cities and regions (Table 18). They are higher in Devoll, Peqin, Krujë, Lezhë, Gjirokastër, Kuçovë and in some areas of Tirana.

Table 18. Levels of Roma illiteracy by location for the age group 7-20 (%)

No.	City	Total Roma illiteracy levels	Illiteracy level for the age group 7-20	Illiteracy level for girls aged 7-20
1.	Rrogozhina	24	38	40
2.	Delvina	29	50	43
3.	Devoll	76	76	81
4.	Fier	36	39	42
5.	Peqin	65	63	53
6.	Saranda	25	44	53
7.	Korça	35	39	35
8.	Kuçova	37	40	50
9.	Gjirokastër	38	49	38
10.	Elbasan	21	22	29
11.	Pogradec	14	10	10
12.	Krujë	58	57	62
13.	Berat	55	61	68
14.	Lezha	50	62	50
15.	Tirana	42	49	47
	Total	40	47	47

Source: UNDP Vulnerable Groups Dataset, 2005

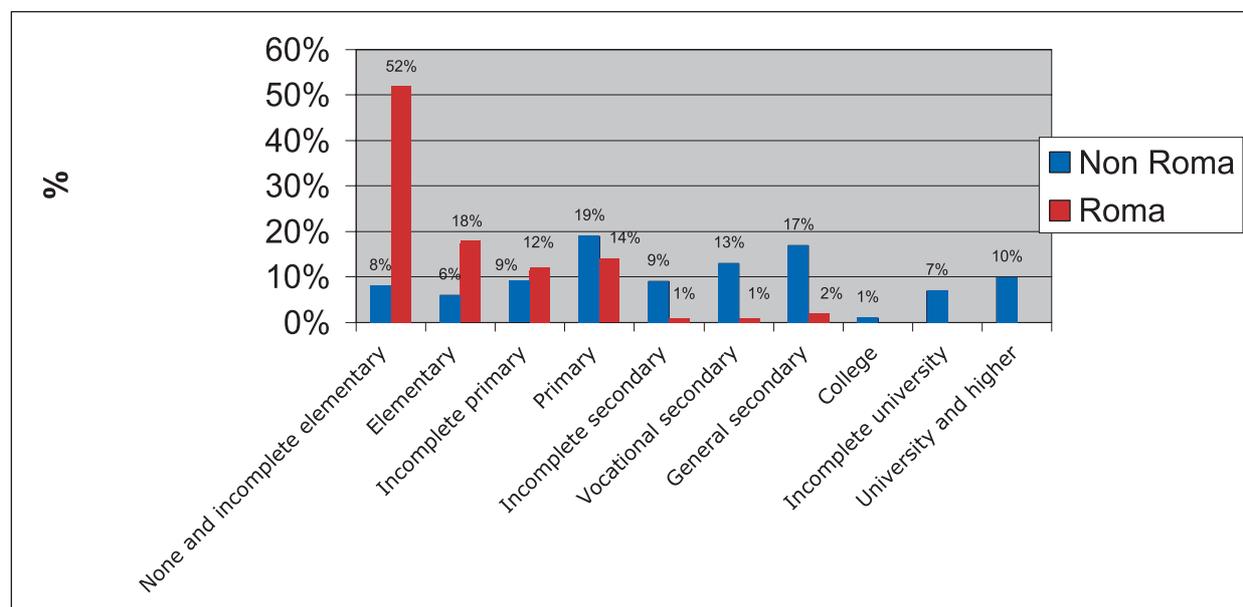
A considerable share of eligible Romani children are not even enrolled in schools, in addition to the many children who abandon school at early stages of the education system. According to a study conducted by the Amaro Drom Roma association in Levan community of Fier, out of a total of 256 children aged 6-15 years old, 62 children have enrolled school and only 36 have actually continued attending. In Fushë Krujë from a community of some 150 families, only 11 Romani children are enrolled in schools.²² Many of those Romani children who attend school are nevertheless often unable to read and write at the level that their age would require.

Albanian Roma generally have lower educational levels and less years spent at school. Among the Roma surveyed in the UNDP research, over a half (52 percent) had no education, 18 percent had attended just several grades of elementary school, followed by 14 percent of those who managed to complete primary school only (Graph 2). Only three percent Romani respondents in Albania graduated from any kind of secondary schools, and a further four percent graduated from colleges or universities. On average, Romani women have lower educational levels than men, where 56 percent have no education, and 11 percent have left education while

²² Amaro Drom, "The voice of children is calling us", Tirana, 2003.

attending primary school, i.e. in early teenage years. The average number of school years for Roma is 3.4 (3.8 for men and 3.1 for women), whereas for the non-Romani population this indicator is 9.8.

Graph 2. Education levels



Source: UNDP Vulnerable Groups Dataset, 2005

The increase of illiteracy levels and the decline of educational levels during the transition period make the inclusion of Roma and their integration in the new social and economic system very difficult. From the educational point of view, this also deepens the dividing features between Roma and the non-Romani population.

III.2 Barriers to Education

Poverty is one of the primary factors contributing to the low educational levels of Roma. The other instrumental factors include internal and external migration, low educational and aspirational level of parents, marriages at a young age, the proximity of schools and related security issues, language knowledge, institutional issues, etc.²³

i. Poverty-Related Barriers to Education

One of the main reasons why Romani children do not go to school, or often abandon it in the case of those who enrol school, is their extreme poverty, or the difficult economic status of their families. According to the UNDP survey results, 54 percent of Romani households with children stated that they could not afford the education of their children, compared to 12 percent of non-Romani households under the same circumstances. On average, a Romani family spends 20 EUR per year on their children's education, while non-Romani households yearly spend 308 EUR for the same purpose. For 34 percent of the Roma surveyed, facing the expenses for the purchase of books, school

²³ To identify the barriers in the education of Romani children, the parents of those children who do not go to school were offered a list of 10 possible barriers, as well as the option "other." The parents were requested to choose only one of the obstacles that cause the dropout of their children; this does not indicate that they have not been affected by any other obstacles as well. Their answers are elaborated further in this section.

equipment, paying fees and other education-related costs – which would often exceed their income – was the main reason why their education stopped. Additionally, data from qualitative sources suggest that many Romani families cannot afford to buy comfortable clothes or decent clothes for their children, unlike most non-Romani families. Bearing in mind the data on incidences of hunger, Romani children often suffer from malnutrition and consequently experience difficulties in concentrating during the learning hours.

“Roma children are physically very weak, and do not concentrate during the study hours. I think that this comes from insufficient food. I have been teaching for 20 years and I was always distressed by this.”
Majlinda, a teacher in the city of Elbasan

The difficult conditions in which Romani children live prevent them from studying and doing their homework, and as the families are mainly impoverished this often results in children having to work and contribute to their families’ income. Thus some Romani children abandon elementary school because they have to assist their parents in daily errands. Fifteen percent of the Roma surveyed who left school have done so because they needed to work (17 percent for boys, and 14 percent for girls). Generally, the boys work or help their parents in economic activities, whereas the girls do housework and take care of their siblings. In some cases, Romani children abandon school as they engage in begging in order to secure income for their families. Clearly, any attempts to include Romani children into schools have to take into account the economic factors as well.

ii. Migration/Emigration

Some Romani children do not enrol in school, or they abandon it because their parents migrate during the academic year. Some families travel throughout Albania to sell used clothes and other items while taking their children with them. Some families move abroad. In Gjirokastër and Delvinë, Roma families migrate to Greece for a short period from May to October, taking the children with them. Similarly, Roma from Rrapishta near Elbasan briefly migrate to Greece, where women and children collect used clothes or engage in begging. In such cases, it is difficult for Romani children to continue with education upon their return, and to eventually complete classes at the end of the school year. In the host country, most children from Albania do not go to school for different reasons, such as not knowing the language, having to work, their difficult living conditions, and the temporary character of their stay.

iii. The Educational Level of Parents

The low educational levels of Romani parents, and their consequent low aspirations in this respect, are one of the reasons preventing children from going to school, or completely abandoning it after they enrol. Some parents do not consider the education of their children as a necessity. Almost 13 percent of Romani children (15.3 percent for the boys and 11.9 percent for the girls) did not receive education because they were “stopped by their parents,” according to the UNDP survey. Furthermore, 19 percent of Roma also stated that their education was stopped because they believed that their level of education was sufficient. Some parents do not, or cannot, help or convince their children to study at home. For instance, in the opinion of Skënderi, a Romani teacher from Delvina, “The low educational and cultural level of Romani families is a reason for concern, because they cannot support their children in continuing education as with their peers.”

iv. Early Marriages

Romani children, particularly girls, abandon school at a relatively young age because of early marriages, or prejudgments that their parents have. The latter is due to a patriarchal upbringing according to which girls should not associate with boys when they reach their early teenage years. Schools are perceived as places where this unwanted association would take place. According to the survey data, two percent of Romani children (4 percent girls and less than one percent boys) abandoned elementary school for this reason. Additionally, 11 percent of Romani women have interrupted education at the early teenage years, though not necessarily for the reason of getting married. The headmaster of a secondary school in the village of Baltëz in Fier described this phenomenon in their school in the following way: "In our school there are 70 Romani students from the first to the eighth grade. The children in lower grades are interested in school, but there are very few who finish the eighth grade. Up to the fourth grade, the ratio of girls to boys in our school is almost equal. However, starting from the fifth grade, many girls are kept at home because their parents want them to get married, so from the fifth to the eighth grade there are no Romani girls at school. However, the number of boys is also lower, because their parents ask them to help with work."

v. Language Barriers

One of the difficulties that Romani children face when starting to go to school is the inability to speak the Albanian language well. According to the UNDP survey data, 100 percent of Romani households communicate at home primarily in Romani language, though all of them speak Albanian as well. Furthermore, 87 percent of Romani children who go to school attend classes where the majority of students are ethnic Albanians. Only 13 percent, mainly in rural areas, attend classes where the majority is of Romani ethnicity. Nevertheless, there are children in large Romani communities, like for example Fushë Krujë and Rrapishtë of Elbasani, who do not speak Albanian at all. Such children face additional difficulties from the beginning of their schooling, which prevents them to advance at the same pace as other children, and in some cases this has even forced them to abandon school. The results of the survey indicate that out of Roma aged 6-22 who do not go to school, one percent left school due to language problems. During qualitative research, Skënderi, a Romani leader from Elbasani emphasized that, "One of the main reasons that Romani children abandon school is because they do not know how to communicate in Albanian. Roma speak Romani to their children, and our children up to the age of 6 years speak only Romani. It is not right to place a child who does not speak Albanian in a class with Albanian children. Romani children answer questions in half Albanian, half Romani, and other pupils make fun of them, so they leave school in shame."

This difficulty is deepened by the absence of pre-school Albanian language classes for these children. There is also a lack of Romani teachers who might assist children in their studies. The experience of Majlinda, a teacher in Bilisht, was the following: "Romani children are smart, but it would be difficult for anyone to start going to school in a language that one does not speak. To overcome this obstacle, I learnt how to count in their language and then I taught them the same in Albanian"

vi. Proximity of Schools

The survey data suggest that one percent of Roma aged 6-22 do not attend school due to the far distance of schools from their homes, coupled with the insecurity they feel when travelling the distance.

Forty-seven percent of Romani children attended schools that were 1 to 3 km away; 98 percent of all children walked to school, and only two percent went by car or bus. In some cities the distance from schools is far because of closures of nearby schools and the migration of communities from village to city suburbs (De Soto and others 2005). For instance, in the village of Levan near Fier some Romani children do not go to school because it is 3-4 kilometres away and parents feel insecure to send their children to school. In Fushë Krujë, most children from the Romani community do not attend school because “it is far away and the non-Romani children beat them.”

vii. Discrimination by Teachers

In the majority of the interviews and focus groups conducted with Romani parents and students in the course of the survey, it was reported that most teachers do not show any discriminatory attitudes towards Romani children. However, concerns have been raised regarding the ways Romani children are sometimes treated at schools, where, for instance, teachers order them sit at the back of the classroom, which prevents them from following closely and participating in class discussions. Allegedly, in some cases teachers have also insulted Romani children openly among their peers.

IV. The Labour Market

The most dramatic change for Roma, during the post-communist transition, was the change of their status in the labour market. Currently, as a result of their mainly low educational and qualification levels, often combined with discriminatory treatment in employment procedures, Roma experience a high rate of long-term unemployment compared to the non-Romani population. Furthermore, women and youth are particularly negatively affected by this phenomenon. In terms of venues for Roma employment, the informal sector remains the main source of jobs for Roma. Another specific characteristic of Roma employment, in comparison with the non-Romani population, is that Roma mostly do unqualified, part-time or casual jobs. These types of activities include the trade of used clothes, work in agriculture, public services, and construction work. The income gained from such employment is low, and consequently Roma remain most likely to stay caught in the poverty trap.

IV.1 Traditional Socio-Occupational Identities

Roma in Albania have traditionally been involved in agriculture, horse trade, handicraft and music. During the socialist period (1944 – 1990) changes in society have also affected the socio-professional identity of the Roma. These alterations were conditioned by the expansion of new economic sectors, the inclusion of Roma in mandatory education, and the social policies of the ruling political system that created a sense of security by guaranteeing employment in the state sector.

The Meçkar tribe, a tribe that had traditionally worked in agriculture, were integrated into cooperatives and farms where they learned new skills. Some Roma found employment in artistic and forestry enterprises where they continued to pursue their traditional skills in the production of articles made of wicker. This particularly took place in the towns of Gjirokastër, Berat, and Korçë. The Karbuxh Roma that

were employed in agriculture primarily pursued employment in services that assisted carting, storing, guarding, etc... In the cities, Roma were employed in public services, where they were given menial jobs, such as cleaning/environmental maintenance, industrial and construction enterprises, transportation companies.

Although the socialist system in Albania had progressively halted the conduct of private activities and prohibited it with the 1976 Constitution, some of the Roma – mainly from the tribes of Karbuxh, Cergar and Bamill – continued to be engaged in horse trading, or traded products made of bulrush and copper. They also traded articles that they bought in the cities and later sold in the villages. Romani musicians also continued to pursue their profession at weddings and other festive ceremonies. The exercise of these informal activities gave Roma some supplemental income.

IV.2 Transition and Unemployment

At the commencement of the transition to a market economy in Albania the majority of state enterprises were either shut down or had reduced their activity as a result of reconstruction and privatization. This process immediately created massive unemployment which affected Albanian Roma more than other groups. Due to their one-sided professional training, their mainly low level of education and qualification, and some discriminatory attitudes by employers, Roma were the first ones to be fired and the last to be hired. It is considered that the most severe problem concerning the Roma in Albania is their high rate of unemployment, which is higher than the unemployment of the non-Romani population (De Soto, Gedeshi, 2002). The precise actual unemployment rate of Roma in Albania is unavailable as official statistics on unemployment disaggregated by ethnicity is not collected in Albania. Practically, the only sources of relevant information are the results of surveys based on socioeconomic household questionnaires. Referring to data gathered via the socioeconomic household questionnaire, De Soto and others assessed that the rate of unemployment for the Roma labour force was 71 percent in year 2002, compared to the official unemployment rate for 2002 of 15.8 percent.²⁴

The results of the survey also support the claim that unemployment in Albania affects Roma more than the non-Romani population. While eight percent of majority members surveyed stated that they were unemployed, this was the case with 24 percent of Roma. On the other hand, in terms of employment, thirty-six percent of the non-Romani household members and 25 percent of Roma household members stated that they were employed. Romani unemployment is also characterized by having a greater negative impact on the youth (55 percent for the age group of 15-29, to 34 percent for the age group of 30-49).

Meanwhile, the type of employment indicates that only 14 percent of the Roma aged 15 and above (compared to 39 percent for the non-Romani population) are employed “full time”; 14 percent (compared to 6 percent of the non-Romani population) work “part time” and 11 percent (compared to 2 percent of the non-Romani population) have “casual work”. The high percentage of the Roma that do work “part time” and have “casual work” increases the insecurity of the sources of income. (Table 19)

²⁴ UNDP Albania, National Human Development Report 2005: Pro Poor and Pro Women Policies - Operationalizing MDGs in Albania, Tirana: UNDP Albania, 2005, p. 38.

Table 19. The state of employment for Roma and non-Roma aged 15 and above in the past month (%)

No.	The state of employment	Non-Roma	Roma
1.	Full time work	39	14
2.	Part time work	6	14
3.	Occasional work	2	11
4.	On holidays/ill	*	*
5.	Working on the farm/land	3	1
6.	Doing housework	6	9
7.	Studying	13	2
8.	Does not work	25	48
9.	Don't know/Refused	6	*

Source: UNDP Vulnerable Groups Dataset, 2005

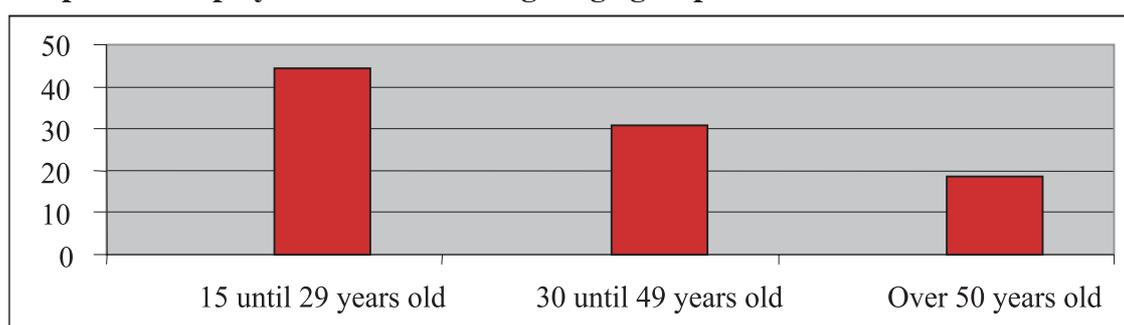
While in the Romani community unemployment among men (25 percent) is slightly higher than the unemployment of women (23 percent), a large share of the Romani female population are housekeepers (21 percent), while this category among Romani men does not even reach one percent. When the share of total Roma unemployment (24 percent) is added to the total percentage of Romani housekeepers (11 percent) it is obvious that 35 percent of the Roma labour force do not work, which is almost two times higher than the share of the non-Romani population (Table 20).

Table 20. The socio-economic status of Romani and non-Romani household members (%)

No.		Non-Roma	Roma
1.	Unemployed	8	24
2.	Housekeeper	10	11
3.	Student	29	12
4.	Retired/disabled	10	5
5.	Employed/self-employed	36	25
6.	Child/Other	8	22
7.	Refuse/Don't know	*	0
	Total	100	100

Source: UNDP Vulnerable Groups Dataset, 2005

The unemployment rate within the Roma population varies according to age groups and their level of education. The latter is an important factor of success in the labour market, even though the unemployment rates of Roma in all education categories rank relatively high. The results of the survey show that the rate of unemployment among Roma declines with the increase of the level of education. For instance, the unemployment rate of Roma with primary education is 39 percent, for those with completed secondary education it is 15 percent, and the unemployment of those with higher education is slightly over 8 percent. The decline of unemployment also applies to the age group with Roma from higher age groups being affected with lower unemployment (Graph 3).

Graph 3. Unemployment rate according to age-groups

Source: UNDP Vulnerable Groups Dataset, 2005

IV.3 Long-term Unemployment

Another characteristic of the unemployment among Roma is its duration. A study of the World Bank indicated that Roma unemployment was of long-term character and that 88 percent of Roma have been unemployed for more than one year. Furthermore, the wave of massive unemployment began with the restructuring of state enterprises in 1991 (De Soto and others, 2005). The results of the UNDP survey also indicate that the length of unemployment among Roma provides a reason for concern: 73 percent of unemployed Roma have never been employed (in comparison with the 46 percent for the non-Romani population in the same situation), five percent have been unemployed for over 5 years, 13 percent have been unemployed for one to five years, and only four percent have been unemployed for less than a year. The average duration of unemployment for Roma is 56.9 months and it is higher for women (66.8 months) than for men (48 months). Also, long-term unemployment is higher for those Roma who have a low level of education. Survey results indicate that there are 63.3 months counted for Roma that have not completed primary school, and 14.3 months counted for high school graduates. Long-term unemployment hinders re-entry into the labour market. Meanwhile the economic and social state of the unemployed Roma is further aggravated by long-term unemployment. Those who have long-term unemployment do not get the compensation, which is paid by the state only once a year. According to the UNDP survey results, only nine percent of Romani households get "unemployment compensation."

Table 21. The duration of Roma unemployment (%)

No.	Duration	Roma	Men	Women	1*	2*	3*	4*
1.	Up to 3 months	1	1.6	0.7	0.7	1.9	0	10
2.	4 to 6 months	1	2.9	0.2	0.7	1.9	7.1	10
3.	7 to 12 months	2	3.8	1.2	1.8	2.5	7.1	0
4.	1 to 2 years	3	4.1	1.7	2.6	1.2	14.3	10
5.	2 to 3 years	5	8.6	2.3	3.7	6.2	21.4	10
6.	3 to 5 years	5	5.4	5.4	5.6	4.4	14.3	0
7.	Over 5 years	5	6.1	4.4	5.6	3.1	0	0
8.	Has never been employed	73	54.6	82.7	73.9	71.9	35.7	60
9.	Refused/Don't know	5	12.8	1.4	5.3	6.9	0	0
10.	Average duration in months	56.9	48.0	66.8	63.3	43	29.3	14.3

Source: UNDP Vulnerable Groups Dataset, 2005

Note: 1 – none or incomplete primary education; 2 – primary education; 3 – incomplete secondary education; 4 – secondary education.

Also the UNDP survey results show that 74 percent of Roma (compared with 21 percent of the non-Romani population) that are unemployed, or work in the informal sector, do not contribute to the system of social security. This condition decreases their economic and social security perspectives (Table 22).

Table 22. Social security contributions by Roma and non-Roma (%)

No.	Social security	Non-Roma	Roma
1.	Yes	72	20
2.	No	21	74
3.	Don't know/Refused	7	6
	Total	100	100

Source: UNDP Vulnerable Groups Dataset, 2005

IV.4 Forms of Formal and Informal Labour

In terms of the sectors of economy, Roma find work in both in the informal and the formal sector. They mainly work in trade (45 percent), agriculture and forestry (16 percent), public utilities (13 percent), and construction (eight percent) (Table 23).

Table 23. The sectors of economy (%)

No.	Sectors of economy	Non-Roma	Roma
1.	Industry or mines	5	1
2.	Construction	10	8
3.	Transportation	5	3
4.	Trade	22	45
5.	Agriculture and forestry	10	16
6.	Communications	1	1
7.	Leisure services (tourism, restaurants, cafes, etc.)	5	1
8.	Public utilities	4	13
9.	Education and science	14	*
10.	Arts and culture	1	3
11.	Healthcare	4	*
12.	Non-governmental sector	4	2
13.	Finance	2	0
14.	Police and security sphere	4	*
15.	Other commercial services (hairdressing, tailoring, etc.)	5	5
16.	Other	*	2
17.	Refuse/Don't know	4	*

Source: UNDP Vulnerable Groups Dataset, 2005

i. Trade in Used Clothes

Forty-five percent of Romani households surveyed in the UNDP research are involved in trade and for many Romani families the main source of income is the trade of used clothes. Trade is also very popular among Roma business people. Sixty-three percent of Roma who launched their own business operated in the field of trade, compared to 48 percent of the non-Romani population. This type of business is present in almost every Albanian city, and is run primarily by Roma families. There are several reasons for which the Albanian Roma, mainly the tribes of Karbuxh and Cergar, pursued this particular type of activity. Firstly, the transition to the market economy and the consequent massive unemployment brought these

tribes into the cities. Besides this there was a historical tradition on small trade among Roma, and many have gained a distinctive experience in this activity. Meanwhile, during the socialist period, some Romani families were informally engaged in small trade, trading clothes that they bought in the cities and then sold to rural families. This was a source of additional income, which some families used to buy clothes in Macedonia, Bulgaria, Romania and Turkey to be sold in the domestic market.

The majority of Romani families bought these goods in bundles from non-Romani wholesale traders that brought them from Italy or Greece. Until the mid 1990s, this trade blossomed as a result of the growing demand for these goods. This ensured employment opportunities and a main source of income for many Romani families in the cities of Korçë, Elbasan, Tirana, Fushë Krujë, Fier and Berat. Other Romani families who were financially unable to buy used clothes in large quantities and also pay for licences and taxes engaged in selling clothes in the villages. They buy used clothes in small quantities at city markets and sell them to rural families. The daily earnings in this case are smaller, but nevertheless they still provide a useful source of income.

The used clothes market is currently on the decline due to the decrease in the demand for goods and the increase in the number of salespersons that deal in this trade, including non-Roma. In such conditions, the income of Roma families from this activity has been on a progressive decline. Some Romani families continue to trade this way by means of taking loans for wholesale purchases. These are, however a minority – the survey results show that only two percent of Romani households, compared to 14 percent of non-Romani households took loans to support their trade. There are opinions that loans increase the economic dependency of Romani households, endangering their security for the future, and that the continuation of this tendency could increase unemployment and deepen poverty in the Roma community.

ii. Agriculture

Agriculture and forestry are the branches of economy in which 16 percent of Albanian Roma find work. The families of the tribe of Meçkar, established mainly on the field of Myzeqe and also in the cities of Tirana, Durrës, Berat and Vlorë, have traditionally been agricultural families and are often landowners. On the other hand, the families of the Karbuxh, Cergar, Kurtof and Bamill Romani tribes have traditionally not been involved in agriculture, though they have lived in villages. Some of these families sold or leased the land that they acquired from the redistribution of previously state-owned agricultural land by the government in 1992.

Meanwhile, many Roma families have nevertheless gained no benefits from the distribution of land ownership following the land reform in early 1990s. In the village of Levan, near the city of Fier, many families of the Cergar and Bamill tribes have not acquired any land. In Fushë Krujë as well, a share of Romani families that resided in the village of Halil have not obtained any land. Even though the relevant legislation required that land was to be distributed equally among the population, its redistribution was done through the agreement of the rural community and the authorities, which rendered some Romani families landless. The importance of this fact is evident in the context of the survey results, stating that 82 percent of Romani families living in villages (compared with 95 percent of families from the non-Romani population) utilize agricultural land. The average area of the agricultural land utilized (though not necessarily owned) by Romani households is 64.8 acres. Out of the Roma using arable land for agriculture, 96 percent are owners of the land, compared to the 98 percent of owners in the non-Romani population.

Only 32 percent of all Romani households grow vegetables for home consumption, and 27 percent grows fruits for the same purpose. Additionally, when asked about their main source of income in the previous month, 11 percent of Roma (compared to seven percent of the majority) said that their previous month's income was

earned by selling their own agricultural products, while three percent said that selling these products was their second best income source. The majority of agricultural products by Roma are nevertheless not produced for the market. One of the explanations of this phenomenon is that Roma-owned land is often cut up in many smaller parcels, located at a distance from each and lacking appropriate infrastructure. The use of up-to-date agricultural techniques, chemical fertilizers and selected seeds tends to be very expensive. The competitiveness of the less expensive products imported from the neighbouring countries is also an important factor. Under these conditions, some Romani families abandon working on their land and look for alternative sources of income.

iii. Occasional Work

Many Roma undertake occasional work. According to the survey data, 11 percent of Roma aged 15 and above do occasional work, compared to only two percent among the non-Roma. Roma mainly create a workforce for menial jobs in construction works, public services, or agriculture. On the one hand, occasional work alleviates the effects of high unemployment rates and raises the family income, thus creating a temporary social buffer. However, occasional work increases insecurity, and is not helpful in collecting greater tax revenues for the state. Also in the long run, short-term employment negatively affects the growth of productivity and the creation of steady market institutions. The unemployed are also forced to look for occasional work in other cities where job markets are more dynamic, increasing the competition in the local market, and resulting in the decrease of wages and the increase of tension between the local unemployed persons and those that come from other areas. Performing music is also one of the specific forms of casual work traditional for Roma. This profession is often transferred from one generation to the next.

iv. Other Sources of Income

Some of the sources of income for Roma in Albanian come from the informal personal activities such as gambling, begging or fortune telling. According to some authors, women and children sometimes beg for money, used clothes and food in rural areas (De Soto, Gedeshi, 2002). In cities, beggars can be seen on intersections and main streets. Some Romani women pursue "fortune telling." According to the survey data, eight percent of the surveyed Romani households (compared to less than one percent of non-Romani households) earn some income in this manner. Seven percent of all Romani persons interviewed said that their main source of income in the past month were from informal personal activities. Well over a half were children under 15, and generally women engaged in this type of activity were twice the number than men. In some areas of Albania, Roma families are engaged in other occasional jobs such as weaving wicker baskets, and collecting and selling medical herbs.

V. Social Capital and Political Representation

Roma use their social capital²⁵ to cope with poverty and social exclusion. Like the rest of the population, they are rich in different forms of cognitive social capital,²⁶ which is founded on trust and solidarity. The survey

²⁵ Social capital refers to the "institutions, relationships, attitudes, and values that govern inter-actions among people and contribute to economic and social development" (Grootaert and van Bastelae, 2002).

²⁶ Cognitive social capital refers to intangible values, norms, and attitudes that govern behavior.

data show that in situations of not having money to buy food, 61 percent of Romani families borrow food or money from friends, 55 percent from their neighbours, and 40 percent from their relatives. Nevertheless, Roma lack structural social capital.²⁷ Roma associations that were established during the transition are fragmented and still struggling to effectively protect their rights. In these conditions it is necessary to strengthen the participation of Roma in decision-making processes on local and national levels.

V.1 Structural Social Capital

Before the outset of the post-socialist transition in Albania, Roma had a specific form of social organization – their tribes. The main function of the tribe was to help Romani individuals and the community to manage their lives in social cohesion, trust and solidarity (De Soto and others, 2005). During the post-socialist transition, as a result of the socio-economic changes, the role of the tribe weakened. Meanwhile, some alternative forms of social organization were created, such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs). In Albania, Romani activists formed NGOs Amaro Drom, Rromani Baxt, Roma for Integration, Democratic Union of the Roma of Albania, Disutni Albania, Alba Rom and others. Some of these NGOs operate on the national level and have established branches in other regions of the country where there are significant Romani communities. Nonetheless, the collaboration among different associations is still weak, and many struggle with insufficient funding. In addition, many Romani NGOs still have few members and enjoy little support in the community, as Albanian Roma NGOs are not able to protect the interests and needs of the community in an effective way.

As shown in the results of the UNDP survey, when encountering a problem, both Roma and the non-Roma living in their vicinity mostly turn to family and relatives for assistance (Table 24). It is also interesting to note that in this respect there is less confidence in the police among Roma (three percent), while their non-Romani neighbours would ask for police assistance in six percent of cases.

Table 24. “If you have a problem, whom will you approach first?” (%)

No.		Non-Roma	Roma
1.	Family, relatives	70	69
2.	Friends	14	11
3.	Neighbours	2	4
4.	Police	6	3
5.	Local government	4	7
6.	Courts	1	0
7.	NGOs	1	5
8.	Media	1	1
9.	Refused/Don't know	*	*

Source: UNDP Vulnerable Groups Dataset, 2005

Only five percent of Romani households would turn to NGOs when trying to resolve a problem, which is lower than the percentage of those who would rather turn to state institutions. However, there is still a higher trust in NGOs than among the non-Romani population, where only one percent would approach NGOs in problematic situations. Also the trust in NGOs is higher in specified situations of threat. For instance, Roma generally consider NGOs as a resource to use when dealing with environmental pollution (35 percent), and diseases related to poor sanitation (30 percent) (Table 25). When facing hunger, as much as 32 percent of Romani households – compared to only 4 percent non-Roma – would

²⁷ Structural social capital refers to formal or informal associations or networks that facilitate collective action.

turn to local and international NGOs for assistance, indicating the perception of NGO activities as primarily humanitarian in nature.

Table 25. “When you are faced with the following threats, who do you think would best help you?” (%)

Threats	Family, relatives	Friends	NGOs	Police	Local government	Courts	National Government	Other (specify)	Refused / don't know
Lack of sufficient income	88	81	17	*	9		2	*	1
Local inter-religious conflicts	29	47	27	33	30	3	5	6	10
Inter-ethnic conflicts	23	30	26	39	37	13	14	*	8
Hunger	74	65	32	3	14	2	6	*	1
Ordinary crime	22	38	6	76	14	23	7	1	5
Denied opportunity to practice your religion	27	42	26	23	30	9	12	11	9
Lack of housing (eviction)	42	39	14	5	55	3	27	1	6
Organized crime (racketeering)	19	7	4	64	14	46	16	*	10
Corruption of the officials	9	8	8	15	27	32	43	3	26
Environmental pollution	14	16	35	7	67	1	28	*	16
Denied access to education	41	38	25	4	35	4	29	1	10
Diseases related to poor sanitation	34	27	30	3	47	3	30	*	11
Physical insecurity	36	50	12	48	14	12	10	*	8
Denied access to health care practitioners	22	29	26	7	46	5	46	1	8

Source: UNDP Vulnerable Groups Dataset, 2005

In only 3 of 450 surveyed Romani households, a member attempted to form an NGO. This was also the case in only 2 non-Romani households. Still, 15 percent of Romani households do receive some income from NGOs, mostly in the value of less than 40 EUR per month.

V.2 Political Representation

Roma have no political representatives in the local or national government, and only a few of them are employed in the public administration field. While Roma do participate in elections, Romani voters nevertheless represent a small part of the electorate, which is additionally dispersed throughout different regions of the country. Because of these factors it would be difficult to elect a Romani candidate that could advocate for their concerns in the Parliament. The results of the UNDP survey shows that out of 450 Romani households surveyed, only 2 households – less than 0.5 percent – had one member each that had a position in the local leadership of a political party and both persons in question were men. As a comparison, 13 out of 450 surveyed non-Romani households had members who were involved in politics. Political parties reportedly do not pay much attention to the issues affecting Roma. For instance, in the media coverage of the July 2005 elections in Albania Roma were largely ignored, though their situation is widely seen as incomparably more difficult than the situation of other minorities in the country.²⁸ It also happens that political parties mobilize Roma voters in the elections process, yet they often overlook their concerns

²⁸ European Roma Rights Centre, "Roma Left Out of Media Coverage Surrounding Albanian Elections", Roma Rights, No. 1/2006, Budapest, Hungary.

after being elected. Arbeni, a Romani man from Korçe, illustrated this concern by saying that: “I don’t see any good in belonging to any party, because we have been used by both Socialist Party and the Democratic Party. They make promises but don’t do anything”.

The situation is similar on the local level, even in the municipalities or communities where the Roma electorate is larger. The political participation and representation of Roma remain extremely low. According to the survey data, there was only one surveyed family whose member, a Romani man, had a position on the local municipal council or assembly. This is less than 0.5 percent of the surveyed households, whereas among the non-Romani population this was the case with 27 households (six percent), with the representation of women in 17 percent of cases. As remarked by the leader of a Roma association, “You won’t find any one of us in local administration”. Without active representation, Roma will have only limited ability to voice their concerns.

VI. Conclusions and Recommendations

As the UNDP survey data indicates, a considerable share of the Romani population in Albania lives in poverty, in highly substandard housing conditions often without basic infrastructure such as water and electricity supply. The income of Romani families is lower than the average income of non-Roma, mainly due to high unemployment rates among Roma and the long-term nature of their unemployment. Literacy rates among Albanian Roma are alarmingly low, particularly among women and the youth. Romani children are largely absent from educational institutions. Health care is out of reach for many Roma, mainly for its related costs, but also due to a lack of proper documents and relevant information. Considerable shares of children remain out of the vaccination networks and thus bear the risks of otherwise preventable diseases. Despite the evident social vulnerability of Roma in Albania, the implementation of the Project Strategy for the Improvement of the Living Conditions of Roma Community lags behind due to financial constraints.

With regards to the serious concerns on the poverty, education, employment, housing, and health of Roma in Albania, as described in this report, the creation or practical implementation of measures necessary to improve the situation of Roma is urgent and most needed. The following are recommendations to Albanian state institutions on issues that deserve special attention, calling for the mobilization and collaboration of all actors dealing with Roma issues:

In the field of education:

- Strengthen the enforcement of legislation on mandatory education;
- Encourage educational institutions to collaborate with Romani communities and NGOs;
- Launch actions to fortify the inclusion of Romani children in pre-school education;
- Create policies to assist vulnerable Romani families with school expenses;
- In creating policies to decrease Roma drop-out rates, pay particular attention to ensure school attendance of Romani girls;
- Proactively recruit Romani teachers;

- Include Romani culture and history into general school curricula;
- Create possibilities for Romani children to stay in school and study after hours;
- Launch literacy courses for Roma out of school, especially women and girls.

In the field of housing:

- Provide low-cost housing for vulnerable Romani families;
- Ensure that any housing policies targeting Roma also contribute to the social inclusion of Roma;
- Build or improve adequate infrastructure in Romani settlements;
- Invest efforts to resolve the situation of unregulated areas housing Romani communities;
- Provide alternative accommodation to Romani families facing evictions.

In the field of health care:

- Provide efficient health care treatment and free-of-charge basic medications for vulnerable Romani families;
- Mediate between medical professionals and the Romani community;
- Employ Romani medical professionals;
- Increase health awareness in Romani communities, especially among the youth;
- Launch outreach visits to Romani settlements;
- Carefully monitor health indicators relevant to the Millennium Development Goals, especially with regards to Romani women and children;
- Undertake overall vaccination of Romani children and share information on the importance of immunization;
- Launch information campaigns on HIV/AIDS and other communicable diseases;
- Take into account the specific needs of the community and collaborate with Romani and other NGOs in such efforts.

In the field of employment:

- Provide vocational training for Roma for skills and qualifications that are needed on the current labour market;
- Combine vocational training with formal education;
- Join efforts with the private sector in providing employment opportunities for Roma;
- Support Roma-run small businesses;
- Target interventions in employment opportunities and promotion venues for Roma engaging in traditional occupations;
- Encourage the employment of Romani women in all employment-related policies and actions;
- Hire Romani men and women as staff members in state institutions.

With regards to policies related to any field of activity addressing Roma concerns:

- Collect accurate statistical information on Roma in Albania, disaggregated by both ethnicity and gender, ensuring to include unregistered settlements, and including Romani surveyors;

- Take into account Roma concerns when creating and implementing any national development and pro-poor strategies and policies;
- The Roma Strategy needs to be revised and complemented with developed indicators for the monitoring of the Strategy's implementation;
- The state should ensure sufficient financial resources for the implementation of its commitments under the Roma Strategy, and ensure careful monitoring whether the projects indeed yield the expected results;
- Besides the national Roma Strategy, local actions and plans should also be encouraged, as they can successfully adjust wider solutions to local circumstances,
- Join the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015;
- Romani individuals and associations must be constantly included in relevant decision-making processes, and especially in the implementation of the Roma Strategy, with a stronger inclusion of Roma in state institutions and local authorities,
- All Roma-related policies should involve gender equality aspects and promote the empowerment of women and girls,
- The state should protect the human rights of Roma, adopt and implement anti-discrimination legislation, and swiftly condemn any violations of Roma rights.

Lastly, constant cooperation and interaction in implementing various parallel initiatives, such as the Roma Decade, the Millennium Development Goals and the national development strategies would maximise the effect of all of these efforts to improve the development opportunities of Roma in Albania.

Bibliography

Advisory Committee on the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, "Comments of the Government of Albania on the Opinion of the Advisory Committee on the Implementation of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities in Albania," Strasbourg, 10 February 2003.

A.T., Magjypët e Shkodrës, Revista Leka, N.7, 1943.

De Soto H., Gordon P., Gedeshi, Sinoimeri Z., Poverty in Albania. A Qualitative Assessment, The World Bank Washington D.C.:World Bank., 2002.

De Soto H., Gedeshi I., Dimensions of Romani Poverty in Albania, Roma Rights, Number 1, 2002, Quarterly Journal of the European Roma Rights Center, Budapest, Hungary.

De Soto H., Beddies S., Gedeshi I., Roma and Egyptians in Albania: From social exclusion to social inclusion, Washington DC:World Bank, The World Bank, Washington D.C., 2005.

Dudwick N., Shahriari H., Education in Albania: Changing Attitudes and Expectations, Washington DC: World Bank, The World Bank, Washington D.C., 2000.

European Commission Against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI), "Third Report on Albania, adopted on 17 December 2004," Strasbourg, 2005.

European Roma Rights Centre., No Record of the Case: Roma in Albania. Budapest: European Roma Rights Centre, 1997.

Government of Albania, Albania National Report on Progress Towards Achieving the Millennium Development Goals, Tirana: Government of Albania, 2004.

Government of Albania, "International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination: Initial and periodic reports of States due in 2001 – Albania," Tirana, 2001.

Government of Albania, "Project Strategy for the Improvement of Living Conditions of the Roma Minority," Tirana, 2003.

Government of Albania, "Replies to the List of Issues adopted by the Human Rights

Committee at its 81st session, in connection with the consideration of the initial CCPR report of the Republic of Albania," Tirana, 2004.

Hasluck M., The Gypsies of Albania, Journal of the Gypsy Lore Society, 17 (2):49-61, 1938.

INSTAT, Statistical Yearbook 1993 – 2001, Tirana, 2003.

Koinova M., Minorities in Southeast Europe: Roma of Albania, Centre for Documentation and Information on Minorities in Europe - Southeast Europe (CEDIME), 2000.

Kolsti J., Albanian Gypsies: The Silent Survivors, in Crowe and Kolsti (eds.), The Gypsies in Eastern Europe, Armonk, New York: Sharpe, 1991.

Milaj J., Raca shqiptare, Tirana, 1943.

Minority Rights Group (MRG), Gender and Minority in Albania, London: Minority Rights Group, 2004.

Minority Rights Group (MRG), Roma Poverty and the Roma National Strategies: The Cases of Albania, Greece and Serbia, London: Minority Rights Group, 2005.

Ringold D., Orenstein A. M., Wilkens E., Roma in an Expanding Europe: Breaking the Poverty Cycle, A World Bank Study, Washington D.C., 2003.

Ruli, G., Hoxha, A., Social Business and Social Exclusion in Transition Countries: The Case of Albania, Institute for Contemporary Studies, Tirana, Albania, 2001.

Silverman C., "Persecution and Politicization: Roma (Gypsies) of Eastern Europe," Cultural Survival Quarterly, Summer 1995.

Taho B., Document on the Situation of Roma in Albania, 2002.

Terre des Hommes Albania, UNICEF and the Oak Foundation, The Trafficking of Albanian Children into Greece, Tirana, Albania, 2003.

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), "Assessment of HIV/AIDS among Young Roma People," Tirana, Albania, 2002.

United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), "Fourth periodic reports of States parties due in 2001: Albania. 12/03/2003," Geneva, 2003.

United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), "Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination: Albania. 10/12/2003," Geneva, 2003.

United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC), "Concluding observations: Albania. 31/03/2005," Geneva, 2005.

United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC), "Consideration of Reports submitted by States parties under Article 44 of the Convention: Initial periodic report of States parties due in 1994 - Albania," Geneva, 2004.

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Avoiding the Dependency Trap. Bratislava: UNDP, 2003.

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), "Western Balkans Forum on Social Inclusion and Millennium Development Goals," Tirana, 2005.

United Nations Development Programme in Albania, National Human Development Report 2005: Pro Poor and Pro Women Policies – Operationalizing MDGs in Albania, Tirana: UNDP Albania, 2005.

United Nations Human Rights Committee, "Concluding observations of the Human Rights Committee: Albania. 02/12/2004," New York, 2004.

United Nations Human Rights Committee, "Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under Article 40 of the Covenant. Initial Report: Albania," New York, 2004.

US State Department, "Country Reports on Human Rights Practices 2005: Albania," Washington DC, 2006.

World Bank, "Report No. 34597-AL. Albania: Labour Market Assessment," New York, 2006.

Appendix: Outline of the Survey Methodology

A. Survey questionnaire

The survey questionnaire that was used to generate the data on which this report is based follows the philosophy of integrated household surveys, with separate components containing both household and individual modules. Within the individual module, each household member's profile was registered (demographic characteristics, economic status, education, health). The household module addresses issues related to the household in general (dwelling type, access to basic infrastructures, household items possession etc.). Questions related to incomes and expenditures were addressed in both modules, making it possible to crosscheck the results.

B. Universe under study

The primary universe under study for the regional research consisted of: (i) all the households in Roma settlements or areas of compact Roma population; (ii) displaced persons (IDPs/refugees), where applicable, which was not the case in Albania; and (iii) domicile non-Roma communities living in close proximity to Roma and the displaced.

C. The Roma sample

The sampling of vulnerable groups in general and of Roma in particular is a major challenge in every survey targeting diversities and vulnerability. The first assumption of the survey was that major disparities in socio-economic status of the populations are most obvious (and can be explored best) at the level of municipality (or other relevant micro-territorial unit). Since at this level vulnerability factors exist that affect both Roma and other communities, vulnerability profiles of the two groups (Roma and domicile non-Roma) in the same municipality were developed, in order to make possible the identification of those vulnerability factors that affect the Roma.

The most difficult question in this regard is "Who is Roma?" and how to appropriately identify the survey respondents. The primary objective of the survey was to map the vulnerability of groups with common socioeconomic, cultural and linguistic patterns – irrespective of how the potential surveyed might identify themselves. Since Roma identity is often associated with underclass status and discrimination, the decision to avoid self-identification as "Roma" is not infrequent. In most countries, therefore, Roma are underreported in censuses, and officially registered sizes of Roma populations often differ dramatically from experts' estimates.

While accepting the belief that censuses understate the absolute numbers of Roma, the survey accepted that the census data provide reasonably adequate pictures of the structure and territorial distribution of those individuals who identify themselves as Roma. Since the absolute number of Roma populations is

not known, random sampling was not possible, so a “pyramid” sampling model was used instead. Within this model, various estimates of Roma population (including census data) constitute different tiers of the pyramid. The bottom of the pyramid constitutes the total (“real”) number of Roma in a country. The top represents the hypothetical situation of total exclusion in which not a single person would self-identify as Roma. Census data constitute one of the pyramid’s tiers, with the pyramid’s strata reflecting the structure of the population. Under this model, if the “propensity to underreport” (i.e., the share of the Roma not willing to identify themselves as Roma) is distributed similarly in different regions within a country, the structure of the population reflected in the census tier would be identical to the structure of the total population. This should be sufficiently unbiased to construct a representative stratified sample.

In practical terms, it was assumed that the propensity to underreport was identical for each region within an individual country. Based on this assumption, the Roma sample was taken as representative of the Roma population living in “Roma settlements or areas of compact Roma population.” Those settlements and areas were defined as settlements where the share of Roma population equals or is higher than the national share of Roma population in the given country, as reflected in the census data. The share – not the absolute number – of Roma was used for identification of the sampling clusters. The knowledge that X percent of Roma (as reported in the census) live in settlement Y was taken to mean that X percent of the sample will be derived from settlement Y. In this way, the demographic structure of the sample reflects the demographic structure of the Roma population (as reflected in the census data in proportions).

At the first stage of the sample design the universe was defined as mentioned above, using “average and above share of Roma in each settlement.” In the second phase, taking into consideration also Roma organizations’ estimates of Roma populations, the distribution of the settlements and population sizes, sampling clusters were determined. Respondents were then identified using “random route” selection processes (third stage).

Internal (self-identification) and external (outsider’s identification) modes therefore prevail at different stages of the sampling process. Self-identification (reported during census) was used in the first stage; external identification (assessment of local people, NGOs, experts) was employed in the second stage. In the third stage (respondents’ selection), the results of the first two stages were confirmed or rejected by “implicit endorsement of identification”.

In some cases (particularly in big cities and capitals), large Roma communities constitute relatively small shares of total populations. In such cases, the sampling methodology conformed to administrative subdivisions (usually the “capital municipality” is divided into smaller municipalities and/or lower levels of self-government). These lower levels were then chosen as the sampling units. Such cases were also corrected typologically introducing additional sampling points.

D. Domicile non-Roma sample living in close proximity to Roma

The non-Roma booster samples were constructed using similar procedure as for the Roma. These are representative samples of non-Roma communities living in settlements with Roma communities of “average and above” size. These samples are therefore not representative of national averages. The idea was to have records of their socio-economic status, which can serve as a baseline for comparing levels of vulnerability and their determinants for the Roma and displaced persons.

For obvious reasons, the samples for non-Roma living in close proximity to Roma were constructed for the same settlements reflected in the Roma samples. In the second stage of sampling (determining the

size of population and the sampling clusters), external identification was used to identify the non-Roma neighbourhoods (assessment of local people, local self-governments). In the third stage random route selection was also applied.

In cases of municipalities with a high share of Roma population and the number of domicile non-Roma population not sufficient for creating a majority booster (for example, in cases of isolated Roma settlements or segregated neighbourhoods), the majority booster was based on a typologically similar settlement in the same district (administrative unit) with Roma population equal or higher the national average. The criterion for choosing this settlement was the 'closest village accessible by road connection'.

The desire to obtain comparable data for non-Roma living in close proximity to Roma reflected a major emphasis of the current analysis: Roma are the most vulnerable, but not all vulnerable are Roma. The domicile non-Roma boosters gave the survey the "benchmark" needed for assessments of the depth of Roma poverty and vulnerability vis-à-vis non-Roma living in similar socio-economic environments. Despite the sample design challenges it poses, this approach allows us to distinguish among various vulnerability factors, particularly those that are related to minority status (and hence can be attributed to various forms of discrimination), as opposed to manifestations of regional development disparities or depressed local economic circumstances. It also provides clues on how to tackle the issues of exclusion and marginalization. Although often determined by institutional factors and policies, exclusion occurs at the level of interaction. This is primarily the level of the community, where people enter daily contacts. Measuring the distance between Roma and non-Roma in areas they cohabit could be an important clue of how to tackle challenges of social distance.

It is important to bear in mind that this approach does not attempt to guarantee national representation for domicile non-Roma communities. Because they share similar socioeconomic circumstances, members of domicile non-Roma communities living in close proximity to Roma may well be more vulnerable than national averages. Whenever national indicators are available these are used as a benchmark to assess the vulnerability of the three groups covered in the survey.

E. Methodological costs and benefits

The samples based on municipalities with average and above shares of Roma population are not fully representative for the entire Roma populations of the countries covered in this survey. They do, however, cover roughly 85 percent of Roma in each country, and as such provide a good basis for developing quantitative socioeconomic indicators of Roma welfare (quality of life, life expectancy, access to services, incomes etc.). The resulting samples are representative not just for residents of segregated Roma communities, but also for the majority of Roma.

The data generated by these samples are broadly consistent with census data, since this survey's data are based on relative numbers (structure and regional distribution) instead of the absolute numbers of Roma registered in the censuses. This approach also gives some standardized criterion for majority booster selection. The major drawback of this sampling methodology concerns its application to municipalities where the share of Roma in the total population is below national averages. Because these municipalities effectively fall out of the scope of the sample, the conditions of Roma concentrated in "mini-poverty pockets" or who are dispersed (presumably integrated with the domicile non-Roma) are not captured.

Both groups are represented in the sample, however. In the first case, most of the 85 percent of Roma who are captured by this survey methodology also live in similar poverty pockets, which benefit from representative sampling. In the second (integrated) case, this would be because a significant portion of 85 percent of Roma are functionally integrated (employed, maintaining contacts with majority communities and institutions) and thus typologically similar to dispersed (presumably integrated) Roma from the 15 percent. Those of the 15 percent who are “dispersed and integrated” and self-identify themselves as Roma are typologically close to those who are integrated into the 85 percent. Those who have been assimilated and do not self-identify as Roma fall out of the scope of the research, either because do not meet the criterion of “being Roma” (whatever that means) or because they do not meet the vulnerability criterion.

Overall, the methodology employed in this survey is based on the assumption that existing demographic information on size and structure of Roma populations can be reliably analysed and disaggregated, in total and by territory. This is not easy to achieve, and the results will inevitably reflect estimates and expert’s assumptions. These steps are nonetheless a precondition for representative sampling procedures, and as such all efforts should be made in this direction.

F. Fieldwork and partnerships

Given the nature of the survey – addressing the needs of groups that are not easy to identify – fieldwork was another major challenge. High level of trust was needed on the side of respondents – particularly in the case of Roma. As a specific and unique minority group Roma in some countries show certain level of distrust towards other ethnical groups and ethnical majority as well. The general rule was to approach the communities carefully, with respect and avoiding any suspicion about the purpose of the data collection. In Albania the survey was executed by the Centre for Social Surveys Index Albania, and coordinated by the GALLUP regional office, Sofia, which managed the execution of the whole regional survey. Using the GALLUP framework made it possible to apply similar standards and procedures in all countries covered by the regional vulnerability project, making cross-country comparisons possible and reliable. After the fieldwork was completed thorough control was run with 10-15% of the sample depending on the country. All errors were cleared. Data control was conducted centrally by GALLUP regional office, which managed the execution of the survey.

From the outset all agencies involved were working in coordinated manner under the methodological and conceptual guidance from UNDP Bratislava Regional Centre. The methodology of the survey, sampling and fieldwork were broadly discussed with colleagues from the World Bank and members of the UNDP Data Experts Group. Three consultants (Gabor Kezdy, Valerie Evans and Dragana Radeviæ) were particularly instrumental in the final design of the methodology and sampling models.