



United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

Serbia

**At Risk: The Social Vulnerability of
Roma, Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons in Serbia**

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Paola Pagliani



INTRODUCTION

The social inclusion of vulnerable groups around the world is an important aspect in realizing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which represent 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.¹ 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. Specific time bound targets and quantified indicators are associated with each of these goals.

One of the responses of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to these challenges was publishing its regional human development report on Roma in Central and Eastern Europe (*Avoiding the Dependency Trap*) in 2002. 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 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", hosted by the Government of Hungary in June 2003 and organized by the World Bank, Open Society Institute and the European Commission, with support from UNDP, the Council of Europe Development Bank and the Governments of Finland and Sweden. At this conference, five Prime Ministers and high level representatives from eight countries – Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, Macedonia, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, 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.³ The national action plans (NAPs) that these governments subsequently designed and will implement during the Decade correspond to the MDGs with their emphasis on poverty, employment, education, health and housing.

As poverty pockets and the social status of vulnerable groups are often hidden by national averages, the real challenges in meeting the spirit of the MDGs lie in redressing the development obstacles facing marginalized and vulnerable groups, including Roma, refugees, and

Box 1: Millenium Development Goals

- **Goal 1:** Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger.²
- **Goal 2:** Achieve universal primary education.
- **Goal 3:** Promote gender equality and empower women.
- **Goal 4:** Reduce child mortality.
- **Goal 5:** Improve maternal health.
- **Goal 6:** Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases.
- **Goal 7:** Ensure environmental sustainability.
- **Goal 8:** Develop a global partnership for development.

¹ For more information on MDGs in Serbia, see: <http://www.undp.org.yu/mdgs>.

² To measure poverty in the region of South East Europe, the World Bank uses two poverty lines based on the purchasing power parity (PPP) of 4.30 USD (absolute poverty) and 2.15 USD (extreme poverty) per capita per day.

³ For more information on the Roma Decade, see: <http://www.romadecade.org>.

internally displaced persons (IDPs). There is a great need for statistical data on the situation of vulnerable groups, especially in the case of Roma where the official statistics appears to be a large underestimation compared to the observed real conditions. It is sometimes argued that gathering data based on ethnicity can cause further discrimination of the groups in question, clearly marking a person as member of a certain group. Yet it is not clear how else it would be possible to measure the success of steps taken for the inclusion and development of marginalized groups, if there is no comparable data to support these claims.⁴ Scholars have also argued that it is “possible to *count* the members of a community without *numbering* them, i.e. without recording them individually in files, registries or computer databases.”⁵ Naturally, the role of the state in ensuring that there can be no abuse of ethnic data is crucial. Providing statistical data and indicators disaggregated by gender is also vastly important, as general averages related to the situation of vulnerable groups hide evident discrepancies in the enjoyment of economic and social rights between men and women.⁶

In response to these needs, UNDP conducted a further comprehensive vulnerability survey on Roma, refugees, IDPs and the domicile non-Romani population living in close proximity to Roma in Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo, Albania, Bulgaria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia and Romania in late 2004. The primary task of this report is to present the data gathered through the UNDP vulnerability survey in Serbia.⁷ This study both measures the levels of Roma vulnerability in comparison with other groups, and provides analytical input and baselines that can be used in monitoring the Decade implementation. These are limited data but can hopefully serve to give insight into the economic and social situation of vulnerable groups, and can provide the data needed for the (rough) calculation of poverty lines, poverty depth, employment/unemployment rates, educational level and educational attainment, and health and housing conditions.

The primary universe under study consists of: (i) households in Roma settlements or areas of compact Roma population; (ii) IDPs/refugees; and (iii) domicile non-Roma communities living in close proximity to Roma.⁸ By focusing on the particular vulnerable groups of Roma, refugees and IDPs, this study by no means determines who is or is not vulnerable. The domicile non-Roma have been surveyed as a control group highlighting the conditions of the other surveyed groups. However in a number of aspects their status substantively differs from the national averages, rendering this particular group comparatively vulnerable as well. Whereas living in proximity to Roma does not automatically determine vulnerability, other territorial-related factors contributing to the vulnerability of Roma could apply to non-Roma as well.

It is also beyond doubt that there are other groups in Serbia that are exposed to socio-economic vulnerability, such as persons with disabilities,⁹ rural population, women,¹⁰ children,¹¹ young people, the elderly,¹² and others. Yet, though Roma and refugees/IDPs are not the only vulnerable groups in Serbia, their vulnerability particularly depends on their ethnic affiliation, or on the experience of displacement, which add a supplementary layer to those who are also experiencing deep poverty, disability, rural livelihood, gender, age or other sorts of discrimination. This study is thus intended to analyze challenges faced by some of the most vulnerable groups, and to test methodological approaches that can be applied to other groups as well. In addition, there are clearly different strata within each vulnerable group, whose needs for development assistance might be varying, depending on their social and economic integration into their environment. Among refugees and IDPs,

⁴ Furthermore, collecting ethnic data is not unlawful in Serbia, provided that written consent is given: Article 18 of the 1998 Law on the Protection of Personal Data allows the collection of personal data on racial origin, provided the person has given written consent.

⁵ Ivan Szekely. “Counting or Numbering? Comparative Observations and Conclusions Regarding the Availability of Race and Ethnic Data in Some European Countries”, in Krizsan, Andrea (ed.). *Ethnic Monitoring and Data Protection: The European Context*. Budapest: CEU, 2001, p. 279.

⁶ For more information on statistics and gender, see: United Nations Statistics Division. *The World's Women 2005: Progress in Statistics*. New York: UNSTAT, 2006.

⁷ The full UNDP Vulnerable Groups Dataset for all the survey countries, including Serbia, is available online at: <http://vulnerability.undp.sk>.

⁸ When used in regard to statistical data from this survey, the terms “domicile non-Roma” or “domicile non-Romani respondents” will indicate only the surveyed non-Romani population living in close proximity to Roma who are neither refugees nor IDPs.

⁹ For more information on the situation of persons with disabilities in Serbia, see: Cucić, Viktorija (ed.). *Osobe sa invaliditetom i okruženje*. Belgrade: Centar za proučavanje alternativa and Handicap International, 2001.

¹⁰ For more information on women in Serbia, see: Government of the Republic of Serbia. “Izveštaj o realizaciji Milenijumskih ciljeva razvoja u Srbiji”. Belgrade: Government of the Republic of Serbia, 2005, pp. 25-32. Statistical data on the economic and social situation of women in Serbia is available in: Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia and the United Nations Development Programme. *Women and Men in Serbia*. Belgrade: Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia and UNDP, 2005.

¹¹ For more information on this issue, see: United Nations Children's Fund. *The Many Faces of Poverty – Participatory Research on Child Poverty in Serbia*. Belgrade: UNICEF, 2004.

¹² For more information on elderly persons in Serbia, see: Novi Sad Humanitarian Centre. *At This Age. Participatory Research on the Life of the Elderly in Serbia: Problems and Potential Solutions*. Novi Sad: Litostudio, 2005.



for instance, the elderly households, single parents with children who are minors, families without regular or sufficient income with members who have various disabilities, members who are chronically ill, with three or more children who are minors or still at school, families of kidnapped or disappeared persons, families with incidences of abuse and neglect, and Romani families are considered most vulnerable.¹³ The increased vulnerability of women compared to men, rural population compared to urban, Roma living in slums compared to Roma living integrated in cities, and so on, could serve as further examples. Also, there are clearly differences between the situations of vulnerable groups in various parts of Serbia. Perhaps some future studies could focus on regional differences, as locally focused approaches might very well complement large-scale national actions.

In Serbia, the survey was carried out in fall 2004 by Medium Gallup, a public opinion, market and media research company based in Belgrade. In 75 municipalities throughout the country, the data was collected in 1201 households, and by interviewing 4582 individuals.¹⁴ The uniform questionnaires, sampling techniques and methodological guidelines were applied in all the countries in which the vulnerability study was conducted, Serbia as well.¹⁵ This narrative report also follows the themes covered by the questionnaire, thus the information presented for some thematic areas is more detailed than others. The results were based on the subjective answers of the persons interviewed. All data used in this text come from this source, unless stated otherwise. The analysis of the data was elaborated by national experts, based on pre-existent literature, anecdotic evidence and a broad consultation process aimed at reflecting into the report the perspectives of Roma and civil society activities, experts in the various fields of analysis, and governmental officials at the central and local level.

¹³ Presentation of Nadežda Satarić, Amity, "Najčešći socijalni problemi posebno ugroženih izbeglica i raseljenih lica," at the conference "Zaboravljena kriza? Siromaštvo izbeglica i interno raseljenih lica", organized by Group 484, Belgrade, 1-2 Dec 2005.

¹⁴ The list of the localities where the interviews were conducted, and number of households and person interviewed per each identified group can be found in Appendix 1 to this publication.

¹⁵ Detailed information on the methodology applied can be found in Appendix 2 to this publication.

POVERTY AND UNEMPLOYMENT AMONG VULNERABLE GROUPS

Who are the poor in Serbia?

Vulnerable and marginalized groups that are deprived of the chance to participate equally in the life of the society – Roma,¹⁶ refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) – account for a considerable portion of Serbian population. While official statistics from 2002 numbers around 108,000 Roma,¹⁷ Romani organizations warn that the real figures might be at least five times higher.¹⁸ Additionally, some 139,180 refugees, mostly from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Croatia, were registered in Serbia as of December 2005.¹⁹ As for IDPs from Kosovo, 207,506 were registered in Serbia as of the time of writing this report, including 22,457 registered Romani IDPs;²⁰ a number of sources estimate that the real number of Romani IDPs could in reality reach up to 40-50,000.²¹ In the vulnerability survey conducted for the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and presented here, 17 percent of the surveyed IDPs were of Romani origin,²² and in this report they will be regarded as belonging to the IDP category alone.

Assessing poverty rates is normally done against set poverty measures. In Serbia, the national poverty line has not yet been officially set; the data from the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) of 2003 set the absolute poverty line at 4,489 Serbian dinars per month per capita. The World Bank uses two poverty rates for the region of south east Europe, including Serbia: 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,²³ and the “absolute” poverty rate, i.e. the share of persons living on less than 4.30 USD per day in PPP terms. Yet regardless of the poverty measure one decides to utilise, the higher poverty risk among refugees and IDPs, and especially among Roma, is clearly evident in comparison with the domicile non-Roma. For instance, the results of the UNDP Serbia vulnerability survey showed that poverty rates among vulnerable groups in Serbia rank noticeably higher when applying any poverty measure.

¹⁶ While acknowledging the vulnerability of the communities identifying themselves as Ashkalia and Egyptians, the UNDP survey has included only the interviewees who implicitly endorsed belonging to the Romani group. For more information on the Roma identification process applied, see Appendix 2, and United Nations Development Program. *Faces of Poverty, Faces of Hope: Vulnerability Profiles for Decade of Roma Inclusion Countries*. Bratislava: UNDP, 2005, p. 8.

¹⁷ The 2002 census registered 108,193 Roma and 82,242 persons whose mother tongue was Romani, according to the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (www.statserb.sr.gov.yu).

¹⁸ See Ministry of Human and Minority Rights and Ethnicity Research Centre. *Romany Settlements, Living Conditions and Possibilities of Integration of the Roma in Serbia: Social Research Results*. Belgrade: Ministry of Human and Minority Rights, 2002, p. 14.

¹⁹ Data received from the UNHCR office in Serbia and Montenegro on 13 Dec 2005.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ IDP Inter-Agency Working Group, *Analysis of the Situation of Internally Displaced Persons from Kosovo in Serbia and Montenegro*. Belgrade: IDP Inter-Agency Working Group, 2004, p. 16.

²² If another source of information was not specified, all the statistical data presented in this report originate from the results of the 2004 UNDP Serbia vulnerability survey.

²³ There is no officially accepted PPP value for Serbia.



Table 1: Poverty rates

	Domicile non-Roma	Roma	Refugees / IDPs
4.30 USD (PPP) PER DAY – WORLD BANK ABSOLUTE POVERTY LINE			
Income-based poverty line	9	58	40
Expenditure-based poverty line	10	57	38
Poverty gap – income-based poverty line	4	27	18
2.15 USD (PPP) PER DAY – WORLD BANK EXTREME POVERTY LINE			
Income-based poverty line	5	30	19
Expenditure-based poverty line	3	26	15
Poverty gap – income-based poverty line	2	11	8
SERBIAN PRSP 2003 POVERTY LINES			
Baseline income-based (below 4,489 Serbian dinars per month)	9	58	40
Baseline expenditure-based (below 4,489 Serbian dinars per month)	10	57	38

Most of the vulnerable population included in the survey have very limited possibilities to supplement their livelihood through agriculture: Slightly less than a third of Roma, and only 18 percent of refugees and IDPs have access to agricultural land. This might also be due to the sampling methodology, according to which, over two thirds of Roma and refugees/IDPs interviewed for the purposes of this survey live in urban environments.

It is important to note that in the Romani community many households live in poverty generation after generation. There are no data on chronic or persistent poverty in Serbia, yet it is generally acknowledged that the shares of Roma who live in chronic poverty conditions are much higher than those of the domicile non-Romani respondents or refugees/IDPs.²⁴ Extended living in chronic poverty creates certain social and economic conditions that make combating poverty a more difficult task. Furthermore, parents who are themselves unemployed and uneducated are mostly unable to adequately support their children in pursuing education or better employment opportunities – their living circumstances can force them to accept certain behavioural patterns that actually perpetuate their poverty. Scholars have therefore argued that social policies attempting to eliminate chronic poverty have to apply broader mandates, including measures such as grants or non-contributory pensions.²⁵

Among the surveyed households living under poverty line, an alarmingly high number are households consisting of one-person over the age of 65 – 43 percent among Roma and 50 percent among refugees and IDPs, unlike the domicile non-Romani population where it is only 10 percent, where calculations are expenditure-based. Moreover, the life expectancy of Roma in Europe is generally estimated to be ten years lower than that of the

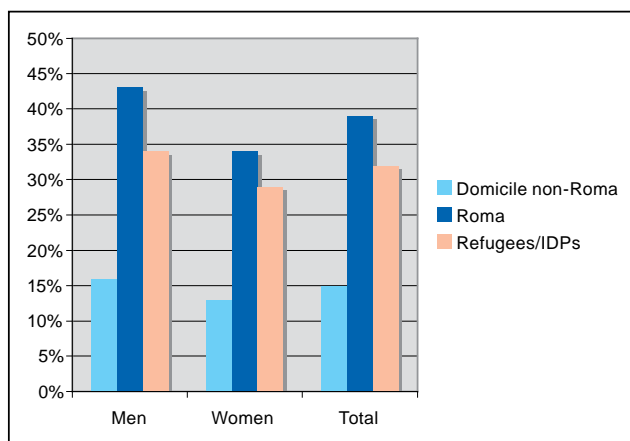
²⁴ Chronic Poverty Research Centre, *The Chronic Poverty Report 2004-5*. Manchester: Chronic Poverty Research Centre, 2004, p. 83.

²⁵ Barrientos, Armando, David Hulme and Andrew Shepherd. "Can Social Protection Tackle Chronic Poverty?" Available at: <http://www.chronicpoverty.org>.

non-Roma,²⁶ whereas national average life expectancy in Serbia is 73 years according to the World Health Organization data for 2003. These estimates are confirmed by the fact that only 16 percent of the surveyed Roma reached the age over 50, while the national average for this age category is 35 percent, according to the 2002 census. The particularly difficult position of elderly persons is also obvious when breaking down poverty rate by age, as elderly persons and children under 16 represent the poorest layers of the Roma population: 68 percent and 63 percent respectively, compared to 11 percent and 16 percent for the same age groups in the domicile non-Romani population. Among refugees and IDPs, those most affected by poverty are children and young adults – age groups 16-24 (45 percent) and under 16 (41 percent). Children are generally considered a vulnerable group in every society, however children from groups affected by poverty and inequality, armed conflict or discrimination face particular dangers of exclusion.²⁷ In Serbia, there are still children who remain unregistered, who suffer and die from preventable diseases, live in institutions without parental care, have to work for survival, live in sheds, become malnourished due to having only occasional meals, or are discriminated on the grounds of their ethnicity, poverty, refugee status or living in remote areas.²⁸

When it comes to the causes of poverty, with all three groups there is a discernible close link between poverty and unemployment.²⁹ Poverty rates are highest among those who are inactive,³⁰ yet this is followed by high poverty rates among unemployed persons from vulnerable groups, and this is especially the case with refugees and IDPs where slightly over 41 percent of both unemployed and inactive live under the absolute PRSP 2003 poverty line, expenditure-based. The unemployment rates among the vulnerable groups significantly differ from those of the domicile non-Romani population: while 15 percent of the domicile non-Roma population is unemployed, the rate reaches 32 percent among refugees and IDPs and 39 percent among Roma. Evidently, creating employment opportunities for vulnerable groups' members would strongly support the process of their poverty eradication.

Chart 1: Unemployment rates



Though the unemployment rate for Romani men is higher than the rate for Romani women, there is also a considerable portion of Romani women who are housekeepers (29 percent), thus performing unpaid work, a category that is filled by a mere 1 percent of Romani men. Furthermore, while data disaggregated by sex show that the ratio of employed women to men is 10:12 and 10:18 among domicile non-Romani respondents and refugees/IDPs respectively, there is only one employed woman for every four employed men in the Romani community.

The length of unemployment provides another indicator of concern: With all three population categories, very high percentages of those out of work force have never had a job – 49 percent of unemployed refugees and

²⁶ Heather Doyle, "Improving Access of Roma to Health Care through the Decade of Roma Inclusion", *Roma Rights*, Nos. 3 and 4, 2004, p. 43.

²⁷ UNICEF. *The State of the World's Children 2006: Excluded and Invisible*. Geneva: UNICEF, 2006.

²⁸ UNICEF Serbia and Montenegro, available at: <http://www.unicef.org/scg/children.html>.

²⁹ With regards to the terminology used in this report, "unemployed" refers to persons willing to work, but who did not perform any work providing them means of subsistence during the referent period. The unemployment rate, according to the national definition, is the relation between sums of unemployed and periodically active persons and the total number of active persons.

³⁰ "Inactive" in employment terms are those persons who are neither working nor seeking work. ("The 20 Key Indicators of the Labour Market", *Key Indicators of the Labour Market*, 4th edition, International Labour Organization (ILO), Geneva, 2005.)



Box 2: Roma unemployment in Niš

According to the data of the National Employment Agency, 2,479 unemployed Roma were registered in the south Serbian city of Niš in mid-2004, where 1,442 of them (59%) were Romani women; the total number of registered job seekers in Niš at that time was 40,722. Among the registered unemployed Roma 1,308 actively sought work, while the rest registered with the Agency in order to regulate their health insurance, child benefits, or other. Most of the Romani job seekers are unqualified labourers (91%), while the majority of job seekers generally registered with the agency are those with high school education (75%). The dominant age groups among the unemployed Roma are those aged 31 to 50. In the course of 2003, only 138 Romani men got temporary jobs, and 24 men got permanent contracts. As reporting one's ethnicity when registering with the Agency is voluntary and done by a limited number of persons, there is a possibility that the numbers of unemployed Roma could be much higher, especially that an unspecified number of Roma do not register with the Agency at all.

SOURCE: DRUŠTVO ROMA "SAIT BALIĆ" AND YUROM CENTRE³¹

IDPs, and as much as 67 percent of unemployed Roma. Additionally, the percentage of domicile non-Romani respondents that have never been employed is also quite considerable (40 percent). Demographically, Roma make a very young group, and 54 percent of the population is aged 15-49, the age when they could be making a strong working contribution, nevertheless 70 percent of Roma in this age category have never had a job.

In terms of monthly income regardless of the source, 50 percent of the domicile non-Romani respondents and 30 percent of refugees/IDPs belonged to the group earning over 150 EUR per month.³² Only 15 percent of surveyed Roma fall within this income category, while the largest category of Roma (25 percent), however, live on less than 30 EUR per month. In all three population groups, women's income was lower than that of the men. It is also worth noting that high percentages of respondents reported not having earned any income in the previous month: 43 percent among domicile non-Roma population, 66 percent among Roma, and 61 percent among refugees and IDPs. Additionally, in some cases, the persons making an income were actually children: the percentage of children over 6 and under 15 making an income ranged from over 9 percent of the total population among the domicile non-Roma, to 14 percent among Roma. Particularly among Roma, because of the difficult economic situation in their families, children engage in contributing to the household budgets in various ways, from taking care of younger siblings while parents are working, to begging, working in trade, etc.³³

³¹ Društvo Rom "Sait Balić" and Yurom Centre. *Strategija zapošljavanja Roma u Nišu*. Niš: Krug, 2005, pp. 13-4, 24-25.

³² In comparison, the average net salary in Serbia in February 2006 was 19,567 dinars (approximately 225 EUR), according to the Statement no. 72 of 21 March 2006 of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, based on monthly reports on employees and salaries filed by Serbian firms, institutions and other organizations regardless of their ownership, legal status or type of activity.

³³ Child Rights Centre. *Dečji rad u Srbiji: Analiza zakonodavstva, prakse i pojavnih oblika dečjeg rada*. Belgrade: CRC, 2006, pp. 69-79.

Chart 2: Monthly income of Romani men

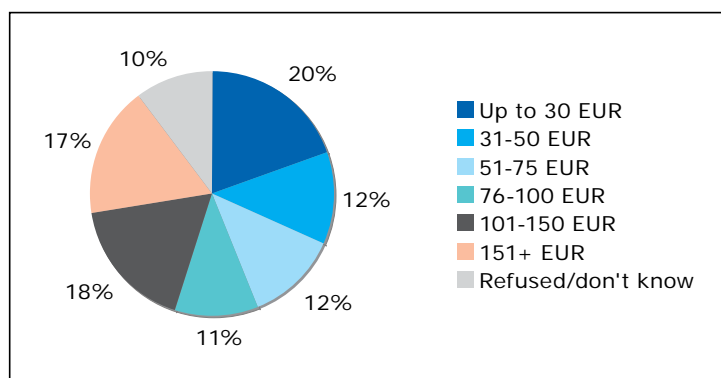
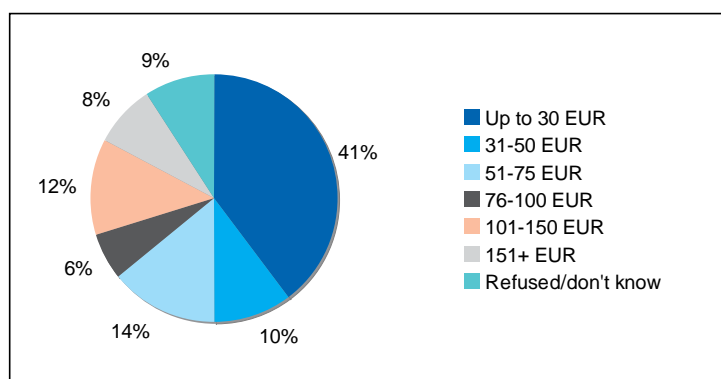


Chart 3: Monthly income of Romani women



Sources of income are very diverse for all three groups. The domicile non-Romani respondents mostly earn their income in regular state jobs (41 percent), followed by pensions and disability, sickness or veteran's benefits (19 percent), whereas 15 percent earn regular wages in private firms. Following the same pattern, refugees and IDPs mostly make a living working for the state (25 percent), receiving pensions (17 percent), and working for private companies (13 percent). The income sources of Roma differ to a large extent, as the main sources of income are: paid work performed informally for friends and neighbours (21 percent), regular state jobs (12 percent) and selling goods at markets (10 percent). Ten percent of all Romani persons investigated live in households in which child support or maternity benefits are a primary source of income,³⁴ compared to 1 percent domicile non-Romani respondents and 3 percent refugees and IDPs.

Only 9 percent of all surveyed Roma receive pensions, compared to 16 percent that retired domicile non-Roma make in their demographic category. The reasons for this might be various: because many Roma work in the informal economy and therefore are not entitled to pension, because they do not have access to relevant information and are not aware of their rights, but also because in general there are not too many Roma in the elderly age categories, due to the community's lower average life expectancy. Furthermore, a number of Roma lack personal documents and cannot receive any social transfers; the lack of personal documents, widespread among certain groups of domicile Roma and also Romani and other IDPs, presents a serious obstacle to the enjoyment of many social and economic rights of vulnerable groups.³⁵ Also with regards to income, a mere 1 percent of Roma stated that they make an income out of informal personal activities, such as begging or fortune telling, which contradicts the negative stereotypes about Roma where they are perceived as mainly making a living out of these and similar activities.

Among the employed in all three groups, the biggest shares of respondents are engaged in the trade sector; for Roma, the second most popular sector is that of agriculture and forestry:

³⁴ This is significantly less than in some other countries – in Slovakia, for instance, state benefits present the main source of income for up to 70 percent Roma. (UNDP, *Avoiding the Dependency Trap*. Bratislava: UNDP, 2003)

³⁵ More information on the statelessness and lack of personal documents among IDPs can be found in: IDP Inter-Agency Working Group, footnote 21, pp. 29-38. For information on the lack of citizenship and personal documents among Roma in Serbia and Montenegro, see: Perić, Tatjana, "Personal Documents and Threats to the Exercise of Fundamental Rights of Roma in Europe," Roma Rights 3 (2003), Müller, Stephan. "Civil Registration of Roma: Background Paper". Budapest, November 2005, and IDP Inter-Agency Working Group, footnote 21, pp. 49-51.



Table 2: Main source of earnings in the past month

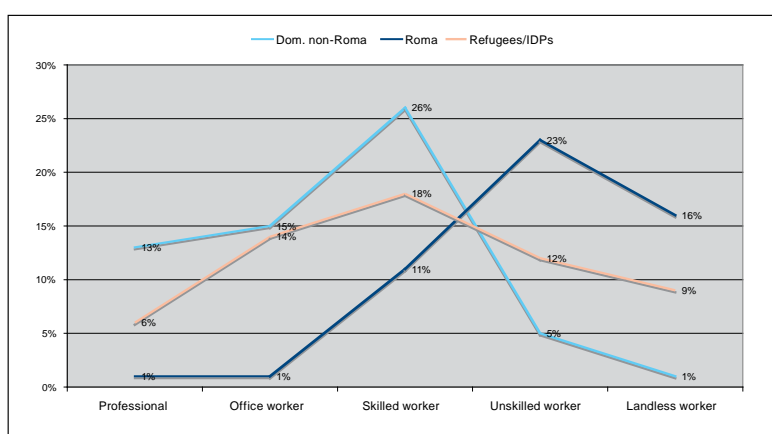
<i>Base: Those who had any income in the month prior to survey</i>	Dom. non-Roma	Roma	Refugees/IDPs
Regular wage from job in state or municipal-run institution or firm	41%	12%	25%
Regular wage from job in private firm or organization	15%	5%	13%
Honorarium from occasional job in governmental institution or firm	1%	2%	2%
Honorarium from occasional job in private firm or organization	4%	6%	4%
Wage or honorarium from job with NGO	1%	1%	0
Profit from own business	5%	6%	2%
Pension, including disability, sickness and veteran's benefits	19%	9%	17%
Unemployment benefits	1%	1%	1%
Stipends, scholarships	2%	*	*
Child support, maternity benefits, parental allowance	1%	10%	3%
Selling own agricultural products	2%	*	1%
Selling goods at alternative markets such as bazaars, on the street or flea markets	2%	10%	8%
Rents, interests	0	0	*
Financial aid from NGO, charitable and humanitarian contribution	0	3%	0
Work performed informally for neighbour or friends for money	2%	21%	10%
Money from selling collected secondary resources	*	21%	10%
Money from informal personal activities like gambling, begging, fortune telling etc.	*	6%	5%
Other	1%	2%	1%
Refused/Don't Know	4%	6%	6%

Table 3: Employment in specific branches of economy

	Domicile non-Roma	Roma	Refugees/IDPs
Trade	18%	23%	21%
Agriculture and forestry	2%	22%	11%
Industry or mining	13%	9%	7%
Leisure services (tourism, restaurants, etc.)	10%	6%	12%
Public utilities	10%	5%	9%

Most of the employed Roma are unskilled workers, while in the other two groups it is the skilled employees that make the majority of the labour force. This comes as no surprise regarding that as much as 47 percent of working age Roma have not completed primary education, compared to only 15 percent refugees/IDPs and 8 percent of the domicile non-Romani population. These data strongly emphasize the link between Roma education and employment, and call for an improvement in Roma education as a starting point for other economic and social development aspects.

Chart 4: Occupation



Six percent of Roma, and 5 percent of refugees and IDPs (most likely of Romani origin) surveyed stated that they made a living from selling collected secondary resources. The collection of recyclable waste engages individuals but also entire Romani families. A research conducted by the Belgrade-based NGO *Democratic Association of Roma* registered 2,300 families, with possibly 10,000 members, engaged in the recycling business. The benefits of recycling are evident, for both the environment and the society, however, this kind of work is currently done in an unprotected, unregistered and unorganized manner, where Roma represent the weakest link in the already informal and chaotic recyclables market. The collection often takes place directly from garbage containers, without any protection, which puts the collectors and their families under health risks. The work involves children as well, and as these activities often take place around the clock it deprives children from education. The recyclable waste is then transported by rather primitive means of transport, often a horse-driven cart, which causes low productivity. As Roma lack adequate warehouses where the recyclables could be stored, their goods lose on quality. Finally, the recyclable materials are sold at a low price, due to an unorganized market, which renders the economic situation of the families involved rather unstable. Roma involved in the recycling work are not covered by any social or health care networks, and are also exposed to racial discrimination.³⁶

Meanwhile, as a part of the process of accessing the membership in the European Union, the state institutions are also in the process of modifying the environment-related legislation. A new draft Law on Waste Management, on discussion by relevant ministries since September 2005, will introduce a number of novelties, many of which might deeply affect the work of Roma waste collectors. Namely, all waste collectors and transporters will have to be registered and obtain the necessary permits, and unauthorized persons will not be allowed to access waste locations and dumps. They will need to have adequate warehouses, in accordance with the

³⁶ The authors would like to thank Hristina Stevanović Čarapina, as the materials from her study of the employability of Roma in the recycling sector, commissioned by the UNDP, provided basis for much of the recycling information offered in this section.



Box 3: Traditional Roma occupations: Musicians

When traditional Romani occupations are discussed, musicians rarely make it to the agenda, though considerable numbers of Roma all around Serbia make their living by playing music, often one generation after another. In the past fifteen years, however, most of them had to work for tips alone, without basic pay, social benefits or contributions towards their pension. Though some of them have played for decades in certain state-owned restaurants, their years of work were not legally acknowledged so they were deprived of shares when these venues were privatized. The years of long hours at night, in smoky restaurants, have taken a toll on their health as well. Currently, in the eyes of the law, they are treated in the same way as celebrity entertainers; in order to work legally, they have to obtain expensive licences. Because of this, some choose to seek work without licences, yet if caught working illegally, musicians face fines and their instruments can be seized.

Now Romani musicians as well have become a part of the impoverished Romani population, though they are often ignored by organizations and institutions who deal with poverty concerns. Romani activists are calling for the introduction of procedures through which musicians could prove their years of service and gain access to at least the minimal pensions provided by the state.³⁹

standards set by law. In their work, they will need to apply the necessary sanitary protection measures. Inter alia, the companies buying recyclable materials will also be required to buy waste from legitimate commercial sources only.³⁷

These changes could have an immense effect on the waste collectors among Roma and reduce their already minimal income-generating possibilities. In order to prepare for the forthcoming legal and practical changes and challenges, the Roma would need to get organized, form professional cooperatives or small and medium enterprises (SMEs), and obtain the necessary permits. Education and training are also needed, ranging from business plan drafting, to good waste management.³⁸ Last but not the least, those Roma who do not have personal documents will again face an obstacle in realizing their economic rights, for those that essentially do not exist in a legal sense themselves have no basis of even starting a business registration process.

Generally, both Roma (12 percent) and refugees and IDPs (11 percent) allege not being given jobs though no one else wanted the same position. Some members of vulnerable groups complained of being the last to hire and the first to lose jobs, too: the latter was the experience of 4 percent of Roma and 5 percent of refugees and IDPs. Discrimination cuts across all education levels among vulnerable groups: interestingly, the possibility of discrimination statistically rises with the level of the respondents' education, reaching, for instance, 28 percent for Roma with higher education.⁴⁰ Some activists also note that uneducated Roma also might not be able to recognize discrimination and therefore do not report it, which does not mean it does not take place. Recognizing and combating discrimination, primarily through adopting relevant antidiscrimination legislation and effectively implementing it, thus needs to complement any employment-targeted projects for vulnerable groups. Though this kind of legislation is usually difficult to enforce, a number of legal successes by Roma in Bulgaria, following the adoption of the Bulgarian Protection against Discrimination Act in 2003, present

³⁷ The text of the draft Law on Waste Management and its justification can be found on the website of the Ministry of Science and Environment Protection of the Republic of Serbia, at: <http://www.ekoserb.sr.gov.yu>.

³⁸ Some successful projects by the development expert Laila Kamel on organizing and formalizing the work of scavengers in Egypt might serve as a good practice example to the Romani communities involved in similar activities; more information can be found at: <http://www.goldmanprize.org/recipients/recipients.html> and http://www.fordfound.org/publications/recent_articles/docs/Solutions_52-56.pdf.

³⁹ The authors would like to thank Romani activist Stevan Nikolić, who kindly provided information on which this section is based.

⁴⁰ Instead of asking respondents "Do you feel discriminated against?" the survey used a set of status-related questions, the answers to which suggest more accurate measures of the presence or absence of discrimination.

a success story that should be taken as a good example.⁴¹ Yet, as of March 2006, there was still no comprehensive antidiscrimination law in Serbia.

The drive to formalize the entrepreneurial spirit among Roma seems low, though this cannot necessarily be said for the presence of the business spirit itself: only 14 percent of Romani households' members attempted to launch a business of their own, and less than a third of them further officially registered their business venture, in comparison to 64 percent registered businesses among IDPs and refugees. It should be noted that one reason for the discrepancy could be the fact that the small business launches of the refugee and IDP population have been extensively supported by intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations during the last decade; in 2004 alone, UNHCR gave over 3,700 micro-credit loans to refugees and IDPs.⁴²

Chart 5: The share of formally registered businesses

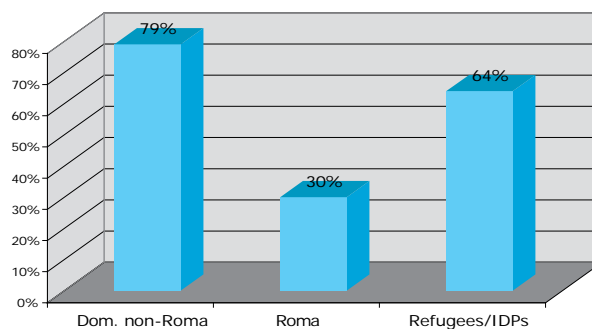
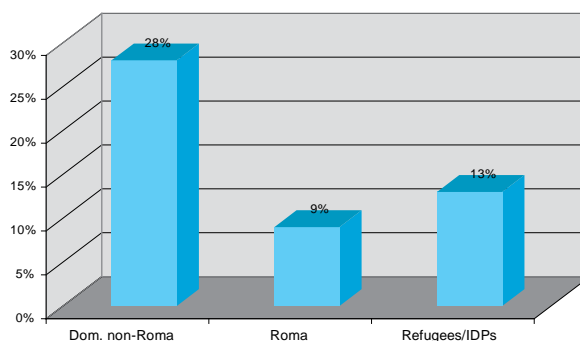


Chart 6: The share of registered businesses that grew and developed



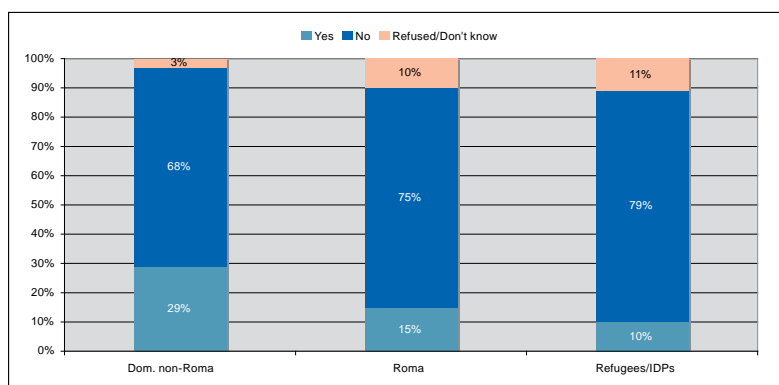
According to the results of the vulnerability survey in Serbia, two thirds of Roma-run businesses were in the trade sector; similarly, trade accounts for over a half of refugee and IDP businesses too. One explanation might be that members of vulnerable groups tend to work in the small trade sector, as this field allows for a certain level of informality, unlike the difficulties they might be facing when registering businesses in other fields. It also does not require considerable investment into equipment or professional training, whereas both would be quite difficult for most Roma. Furthermore, trade skills may be passed down through generations, which also might partly explain for the concentration of Roma in the trade sector. In any case, this field obviously provokes a strong interest among entrepreneurs coming from some vulnerable groups and should be given special attention in small and medium enterprises development plans. Nevertheless, a relatively low interest in formalizing businesses is complemented by a low rate of success: only 9 percent of Romani businesses and 13 percent of businesses ran by refugees and IDPs reached the stage of actual growth and development, compared to 28 percent among the domicile non-Roma. Besides the access to loans, obviously, business education in terms of planning and operating is also necessary.

⁴¹ European Roma Rights Centre. "Bulgarian court fines employer for denying access to employment to Roma", press statement, 16 Nov 2005.

⁴² United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. *Global Report 2004*. Geneva: UNHCR, 2005, p. 433.

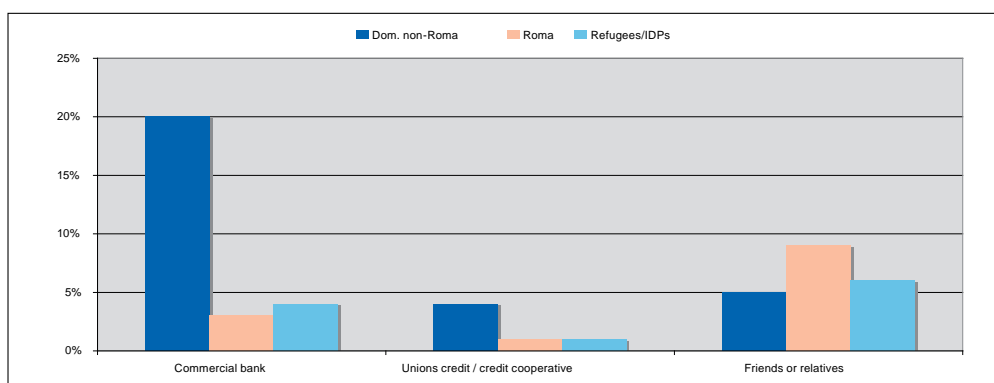


Chart 7: The usage of credits or borrowed money



Roma and IDPs/refugees have limited external resources of financial support and rarely approach commercial banks in order to seek credit instruments. While among the domicile non-Romani population 20 percent uses such opportunities, the percentage decreases to only 4 percent among refugees and IDPs, and 3 percent among Roma. For most members of these vulnerable communities it is very difficult to fulfil basic bank requirements, such as taking a mortgage on a house, in a situation where many Romani settlements are illegal, and only 36 percent of refugees and IDPs live in dwellings which they actually own. Banks also often require guarantors for debt repayment who need to have legally registered employment and a monthly income above a certain amount.⁴³ For many members of these two vulnerable groups, this is beyond limits. Another important and necessary factor, from the banks' point of view, is the lack of credit histories (which is yet another point in favour of supporting the formalization of businesses by vulnerable groups).

Chart 8: The sources of credits and loans



Additionally, seeking commercial bank assistance requires the possession of valid personal documents, which some Roma, refugees and IDPs do not have access to. It has been noted by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons, after his visit to Serbia in 2005, that, particularly in the area of documentation and registration, local administrative systems show tendencies towards having too often “cumbersome and complex requirements,” where members of vulnerable groups

⁴³ Novi Sad Humanitarian Centre. *Economic Self-sustainability of Refugees and Returnees*, Novi Sad: Litostudio, 2005, pp. 13-5.

encountering difficulties in dealing with these institutions in result feel “aggravated helplessness, disorientation and disempowerment”, and renders obstacles for their exercise of various economic and social rights “easily insurmountable.”⁴⁴

Efforts to combat poverty and unemployment

The major efforts to combat poverty in Serbia stem from the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS), adopted by the Serbian Government in late 2003. Unfortunately, the Survey of Living Standards conducted for the preparation of the PRS Paper did not include disaggregated data, so there is no separate information on the refugee and IDP population of Serbia; Roma-related data were collected separately yet by using the same methodology.⁴⁵ Concerns relevant to these vulnerable groups were integrated into the Strategy text later and are also detailed in two special annexes.⁴⁶ Furthermore, in addition to general measures, the Strategy analyses the status and offers recommendations for resolving concerns related to all vulnerable groups, including Roma, refugees and IDPs. In the application of general Strategy recommendations and lobbying for allocating financial means, priority is also given to the most vulnerable groups.⁴⁷ According to the 2005 Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) Review for Serbia, efforts taken to achieve Goal 1 must include poverty reduction among vulnerable groups, which include Roma, refugees and IDPs, and envisage the adoption of the National Plan for Social Inclusion.⁴⁸

Specific strategies relevant for some vulnerable groups have also been created. The 2002 *National Strategy for Resolving the Problems of Refugees and IDPs*, for example, envisaged employment programmes for the extremely socially vulnerable, interest-free loans and micro-credits, self-employment programmes, employment in existing successful companies, and preparation for employment. Yet these programmes target only refugees, omitting IDPs, and divide the eligible population into five categories that were named yet not defined.⁴⁹ This strategy has been criticized for its focus on return, and reluctance to support local integration.⁵⁰ The chief UN expert on internal displacement has also noted the exclusive focus on returns generally in the policies applied in Serbia, and the neglect or even discouragement of efforts to locally integrate IDPs; He further stressed that the integration of IDPs into the local economy and their return are not mutually exclusive – on the contrary, they “actually reinforce one another,” according to the Special Representative.⁵¹

Attempts to resolve Roma poverty concerns in a systematic manner date from December 2002, when the Draft Strategy for the Integration and Empowerment of Roma was drafted under the auspices of the then State Union Ministry of Human and Minority Rights, and with the support of all major intergovernmental agencies, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) in particular. The team drafting the Strategy consisted of two foreign experts appointed by the OSCE, and four national consultants. The strategy was formed in consultation with nine specialised expert groups, including Romani activists, and also with various governmental and intergovernmental institutions. It also envisaged the creation of institutions for its implementation, and just several months later, in April 2003, the Secretariat for the Roma National Strategy commenced its operation within the auspices of the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights. At the same time, in a parallel process, the Roma National Council was founded in May 2003 as a counselling body to the same Ministry. The Secretariat’s first task was to initiate a public debate on the draft strategy and in April 2004 the Roma National Council endorsed the Draft Strategy.

By late 2004 – early 2005, the Secretariat also took on the coordination of the drafting process of the National Action Plans (NAP) for the Roma Decade, while the relevant ministries and the civil society sectors took the role of main actors in creating the NAPs. It should be noted that, though the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights was a State Union ministry, it only dealt with the National Action Plans and Roma Decade activities

⁴⁴ Kālin, Walter. “Report of the Representative of the Secretary-General on the Human Rights of Internally Displaced Persons.” General Assembly of the United Nations, 7 Sept 2005, p. 11.

⁴⁵ Correspondence with Aleksandra Jović, Poverty Reduction Strategy Implementation Focal Point, 17 Jan 2005.

⁴⁶ Global IDP Project and Norwegian Refugee Council. *IDPs from Kosovo: stuck between uncertain return prospects and denial of local integration*. Geneva: Global IDP Project, 2005, p. 16.

⁴⁷ Jović, footnote 45.

⁴⁸ Government of the Republic of Serbia, *Izveštaj o realizaciji Milenijumskih ciljeva razvoja u Srbiji*. Belgrade: Government of the Republic of Serbia, 2005, p. 11.

⁴⁹ Government of the Republic of Serbia. *National Strategy for Resolving the Problems of Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons*. Belgrade: Government of the Republic of Serbia, 2002, p. 14.

⁵⁰ Global IDP Project, footnote 46.

⁵¹ Kālin, footnote 44, p. 10.



on the territory of Serbia. Additionally, at the time this report was finalized (June 2006), as an outcome of the referendum on independence in Montenegro, most of the competences of the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights described in this report have been transferred to the Government of Serbia, where a new human rights office is to be established soon.

The four major action plans in the areas prioritised by the Roma Decade – education, employment, housing and health care – were officially adopted by the Government of Serbia on 27 January 2005, just in time for the formal opening of the Decade in Sofia on 2 February. The drafting of other action plans was completed in March 2005. These additional action plans have largely followed the outlines created previously by the 2002 Draft Strategy in the following areas: persons returned under readmission agreements, internally displaced persons, media and information, culture, social assistance, anti-discrimination measures, as well as the specific situation of women. This arrangement clearly differed from the ways in which NAPs were fashioned in other Roma Decade countries, which mostly focused on the four aforementioned Decade priority subjects. For instance, Serbia is the only country that created a NAP that dealt exclusively with the discrimination of Romani women.

An additional momentum to the Roma Decade activities was the establishment of the Office for Roma Inclusion, based in Novi Sad, in October 2005. The Office was formed under the auspices of the Executive Council of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, and with the financial support of the Fund for an Open Society in Serbia. The objectives of the Office are the inclusion of Roma into the community and their equal participation in public life, together with combating discrimination and anti-Romani prejudice.⁵²

The National Action Plan for Roma Employment commences with the priority of creating a Roma employment database, which should address the need for Roma-specific data currently lacking.⁵³ The time frame proposed includes the years 2005 and 2006, whereas the relevant budgets for the implementation of all adopted NAPs were adopted in November 2005.⁵⁴ The plan puts considerable emphasis on Roma employability and initiating Roma entrepreneurship through small and medium enterprises (SMEs). However, the suggested indicator of success – 100 Roma launching own business within a year – seem modest. There is also a need to include indicators on the eventual success of these businesses, and a better target would be increasing the share of successful start-up businesses. The plan also envisages micro-credits for Roma SMEs, as a way of providing for ways of building Roma confidence in banks, but also the banks' confidence in Roma, and surmounting the obstacles that the survey detailed earlier. Indicators for monitoring discrimination in the field of employment could also be included. This NAP regrettably makes no references to Roma involved in the recycling sector, which is particularly important as they represent one of the most vulnerable strata of the Romani community.

One of the ways in which the NAP plans to increase Roma employability is skills training, currently implemented by a number of non-governmental organizations in the country. The indicator for this activity is 500 Roma trained per year, including 30 percent women, whereas the state should and could probably do more if it would want to reach the Decade 2015 target of decreasing the Roma unemployment to the national average level. The plan also proposes actions raising job-searching motivation among Roma. It has been noted that policies aiming to eradicate Roma poverty have to take into account factors such as "the multidimensional nature of Roma poverty

⁵² "U Novom Sadu otvorena Kancelarija za inkluziju Roma," *Danas*, 27 Oct 2005.

⁵³ The comments on the National Action Plans provided here presuppose familiarity with the NAPs and are not meant to serve as a description of the NAPs; they only highlight some NAPs' elements of relevance for the concerns of our survey, and should not be taken for a comprehensive analysis.

⁵⁴ See the Law on the Budget of the Republic of Serbia for 2006, adopted by the Serbian Parliament on 28 Nov 2005, available at: <http://www.parlament.sr.gov.yu>.

Box 4: Lessons Learnt: Economic Empowerment of Romani Women⁶¹

A number of Romani women are financially dependent on their husbands, having no education and employment: as the vulnerability study data show, a third of Romani women interviewed have no employment, while another quarter are housewives. Many of them were forced to leave school, and the reasons may vary: mostly because the cost of education was judged too high (for 45% of Roma females and 44% of Roma males) or unworthy (for 6% of Roma females and 11% of Roma males), but also because of assuming house or marital duties at an early age - which is the explanation for 11 percent of girls, compared to 3 percent of boys. Bullish attitudes at school were also reported as justifications to leave school in a few cases, according to the UNDP survey. Unskilled workers are not in demand in the contemporary labour market, and for an unskilled worker who also happens to be Romani, and a woman, the prospects of employment become minimal.

Realizing this, the *Romani Women's Centre Bibija* has run programmes economically empowering Romani women in the Serbian capital of Belgrade since 2001. In each yearly cycle, they organize six-month weekly workshops for around ninety women in Romani settlements, where women are taught basic employment-related skills and acquainted with formal employment processes. Twenty workshop participants who have graduated at least from primary schools can pursue their further interests in a particular chosen profession - including trades such as hairdressing and tailoring, but also foreign languages and computer skills - by attending specialized training courses at two state-run open universities. By the way of establishing a formal partnership between the NGO and the educational institutions in questions, it is ensured that course participants get full support from the institutions as well. In addition, *Bibija* also provides books and training materials for the students. Upon successful completion of the courses, lasting six weeks to three months, the participants receive their training certificates. The NGO has also established cooperation with the state National Employment Agency, with the aim of receiving information on vacancies and other data of assistance in job-seeking.

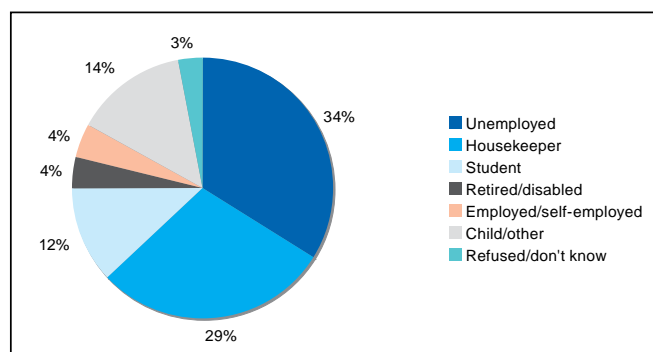
Nevertheless, some external problems, beyond the reach of civil society, still persist. Romani women with additional qualifications might still face difficulties in finding employment as the labour market in Serbia has become extremely competitive. One option that some women have pursued was to accept jobs in the informal economy, with the consequent lack of security of employment, adequate working conditions, and health care or social security. Obviously, a wider state-initiated action in providing employment opportunities for marginalized groups would greatly complement the NGO initiatives.

SOURCE: ROMANI WOMEN'S CENTRE
BIBIJA

and its interconnected roots", and the diversity within the Roma community.⁵⁵ This is certainly applicable and important to consider in Serbia too, regarding the various Romani groups of very diverse social and cultural conditions, including Roma from Kosovo who are internally displaced in Serbia and who essentially suffer from multiple vulnerability as both Roma *and* IDPs. This diversity should be taken into account generally in any Roma-related projects. In this particular case, motivational trainings and other employment-oriented programmes should address needs of particular Roma groups which will have different education and skills backgrounds, particularly having in mind that most - yet not all - Roma are unskilled workers. However, some international NGOs have criticized the approach where trainings for Romani participants are conducted without prior research on the need for those skills on the labour market, or the situations where massive manual labour projects exclusively for unemployed and unskilled Roma are launched, without attention to Roma who are already involved in the informal economy and need assistance in developing their enterprises.⁵⁶ For some of the plan's activities related to employment, such as public works and raising motivation and employment, the time frame has been limited to the year 2006 or the year 2008 respectively, in relation to the implementation time frames of the National Employment Strategy.

This NAP would benefit from some additional indicators. For instance, the indicators for the employment of Romani women are particularly needed, especially with regards to the fact that the vulnerability survey showed the unemployment rate of Romani women to be 34 percent, in addition to 29 percent of Romani women who are housewives, where the 2004 national average for the unemployment of women was 26.5 percent, and the share of female housekeepers 20.3 percent.⁵⁷ Generally, in the implementation and monitoring of this and all other NAPs gender concerns should be taken into account: gender, discrimination and income poverty have been determined as three cross-cutting themes of the Decade in all thematic areas. Indicators and recommendations from the National Action Plan on the Specific Position of [Romani] Women could certainly prove useful; this NAP has been drafted and is expected to be adopted by the Government.

Chart 9: The working status of Romani women



In the employment NAP, implementing partners were not defined in some cases, or have generally been referred to as an institution, without specifying the exact offices in charge. This was an agreed arrangement

⁵⁵ Ringold, Dena, Mitchell A. Orenstein and Erika Wilkens. *Roma in an Expanding Europe: Breaking the Poverty Cycle*. Washington, DC: World Bank, 2003, p. 4.

⁵⁶ Minority Rights Group International. "Roma Poverty and the Roma National Strategies: The Cases of Albania, Greece and Serbia." London: MRG, 2005, p. 10.

⁵⁷ Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia. *Labour Force Survey 2004*. Belgrade: Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia, 2005.



for this and other NAPs,⁵⁸ however it might have been more practical if tasks were divided from the starting point. What is needed is a monitoring framework with more concrete short-term goals, and clear indicators for each activity. Additionally, connections should be made with improvements in the field of education, particularly on the secondary and tertiary level, as it has direct influence on the employment of vulnerable groups as well.

A small number of state institutions and NGOs is mentioned as involved in the implementation and/or monitoring of this and other NAP processes, which raises certain concerns regarding their limited human and financial resources. The establishing of the League for the Decade of Roma might prove a good addition for the proposed general monitoring scheme for this and other NAPs. Formed at the initiative of the Fund for an Open Society Serbia in October 2005, the League is an association of Romani and non-Romani NGOs and the Roma National Council. The League's aim is to contribute to the successful implementation of the action plans;⁵⁹ it is expected that more information about the League's work will be available as their activities develop.

In addition to the National Action Plan on Employment, some Romani organizations from the city of Niš have initiated drafting local employment plans. This was the case with the *Društvo Rom "Sait Balić"* and the Yurom Centre who drafted the "Strategy for the Employment of Roma in Niš" in early 2005, together with the local office of the National Employment Agency. The Niš strategy's Action Plan calls for creating a Romani job seekers database, encouraging Roma to use the services of the National Employment Agency and take part in the employment policy measures, and organizing motivational trainings for job seeking. Hiring Romani employees by local and state institutions, including Roma in public work projects, and encouraging Roma-managed SMEs are also envisaged. While the strategy suggests that social insurance contributions by employers who hire Roma should be subsidized, it also proposes organizing specific professional training for Romani job seekers, support to Romani trade unions and professional associations, and calls for the application of an equal opportunities approach for Roma. After signing a cooperation memorandum with the National Employment Agency, and forming their own Agency for the Development of Entrepreneurship, the NGOs have been implementing the strategy through a project supported by Oxfam.⁶⁰

⁵⁸ Consultation meeting in Belgrade, 15 Dec 2005.

⁵⁹ Minority Rights Centre, "Liga za Dekadu", available at: <http://www.mrc.org.yu/ligazadekadu/>.

⁶⁰ Correspondence with Osman Balić, Yurom Centre, Niš, 24 Jan 2005.

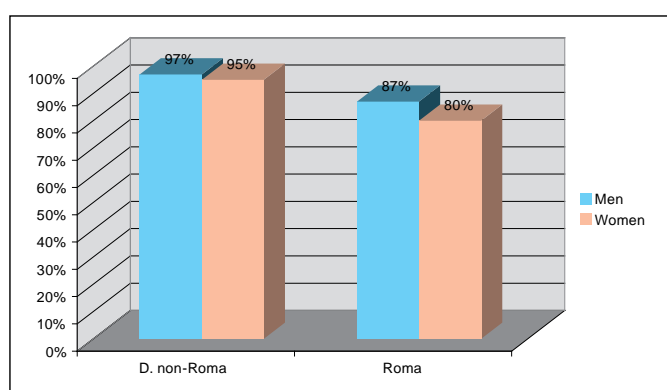
⁶¹ Numerous non-governmental organizations and state offices in Serbia currently implement social and economic projects targeting vulnerable communities. Describing all these projects or evaluating their success would be useful yet it is not the aim of this report. The projects presented in this report are just samples describing initiatives from the civil society sector that address problems spanning vulnerable communities, reveal the complexity of multifaceted issues addressed, and that can hopefully serve as a good illustration of possible inter-sectoral cooperation.

VULNERABLE GROUPS AND EDUCATION

Formal education and literacy

The results of the UNDP vulnerability survey showed that the education and literacy levels among some vulnerable groups in Serbia fall well behind national averages.⁶² While the average literacy rate of the domicile non-Roma is 97 percent, among refugees and displaced persons it is 91 percent, and among Roma 84 percent.⁶³ Data disaggregated by sex for all three groups shows lower literacy rates among women: 80 percent among Roma, and 90 percent among women refugees and IDPs; women above the age of 45 from both groups have the lowest literacy rates in their communities. Evidently, it would therefore be important to pursue literacy programmes for women in these vulnerable groups, especially targeting adult groups.

Chart 10: Literacy rates



The Roma in particular largely miss on formal education: out of the population surveyed, about a third had either no education, or had attended just several grades of elementary school (31 percent), followed by 23 percent of those who managed to complete primary school only.⁶⁴ Only 11 percent Roma graduate from secondary schools, and 1 percent graduate from college. Comparatively, 34 percent of the refugee/IDP population had secondary school education, and a further 10 percent graduated from colleges or universities, while the national averages from the year 2002 show 41 percent of secondary school graduates, and 11 percent of college or university graduates. On the average, women in all three groups have lower educational levels than men, with the exception of tertiary level-educated women from the domicile non-Romani respondents group.

This bleak picture of educational underachievement appears to be reflected in the current enrolment rates of school children. While 92 percent of children of primary school age from domicile non-Romani communities living in close proximity to Roma are actually enrolled, this is the case with only 85 percent refugees and IDPs, and 74 percent Roma. On the secondary school level, this discrepancy becomes drastic: whereas 71 percent of eligible domicile non-Romani population attends secondary school, the percentage for the same category among refugees and IDPs drops to 58 percent, and among Roma it is only 19 percent. At the college and university level, the domicile non-Romani average enrolment is 10 percent, followed by 6 percent among refugees and IDPs and only 1 percent among Roma. At the time the survey was conducted, 8 respondents had an associate college degree and 7 had incomplete university education, out of 1,580 Romani persons interviewed.

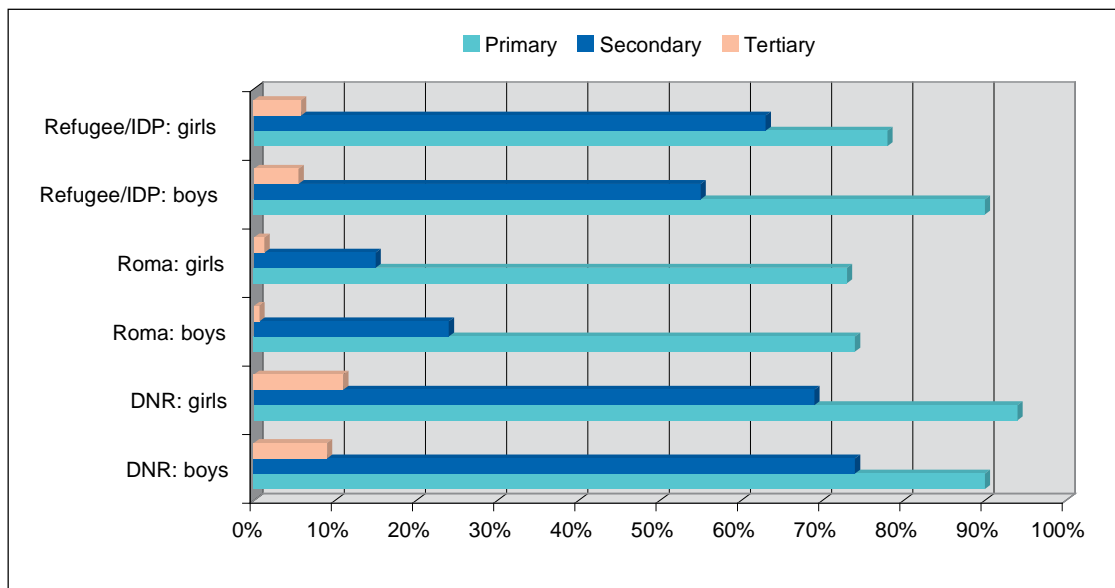
⁶² For the purposes of this survey, literacy was defined as the share of persons over the age of 15 who can read and write.

⁶³ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has criticized the methodology using a survey question where individuals are asked whether they are literate, as this creates two oversimplified groups of "literate" and "illiterate" persons, and additionally underestimates the number of illiterate persons who are reluctant to admit their illiteracy and thus cause inaccurately high literacy data. UNESCO argues for the introduction of literacy profiles measuring the individuals' level in reading, writing and numeric skills, including a means of measuring their progress. (See UNDP, *Human Development Report 2004: Cultural Diversity in Today's Diverse World*. New York: UNDP, 2004, p. 256) For the most recent global information on literacy, see: UNESCO. *2006 Education for All Global Monitoring Report: Literacy for All*. Paris: UNESCO, 2006.

⁶⁴ Experts warn that there are large discrepancies between the levels of real and functional literacy among persons who complete primary education. (See Government of the Republic of Serbia, *Izveštaj o realizaciji Milenijumskih ciljeva razvoja u Srbiji*, footnote 48, pp. 21-22)



Chart 11: School enrolment



The data disaggregated by sex shows that primary school enrolment of Romani girls is 1 percent lower than that of Romani boys, and in secondary schools it is 4 percent lower. Among the domicile non-Romani population, girls lead in primary school enrolment, fall behind in secondary schools, but gain statistical advantage again on tertiary level. Girls from refugee and IDP communities enrol primary school less commonly than boys of their age, and on secondary and tertiary level there is higher enrolment of girls compared to that of the boys (for instance, 63 percent female enrolment to 55 percent male enrolment in secondary schools). The general ratio of girls to boys on tertiary level (1.75 for Roma, 1.22 for the domicile non-Romani population, and 1.05 among refugees and IDPs) is unfortunately not a product of gender equality, but rather a decline in the quality of education, underestimation of academic degrees in the labour market, and the decrease of social importance given to education.⁶⁵

A great deal of obstacles faced by pupils and students stem from financial hardship: as many as 45 percent of Roma and 38 percent of refugees and IDPs aged 6 to 22 named the cost of education an insurmountable obstacle. Chances of external financial support are low: only 1 percent of Romani and refugee/IDP households receive stipend or scholarship assistance. This phenomenon illustrates the vicious circle of poverty: as poverty affects education, the consequent lack of education perpetuates future poverty. Some cultural practices also impede education: 11 percent of Romani girls and 3 percent of Romani boys left school due to marriage, which was the case with less than 1 percent of the domicile non-Romani respondents, and practically no refugee/IDP persons surveyed.⁶⁶ Though this group was not a particular target of the UNDP vulnerability study, it should be noted that Romani street children are also largely absent from schools. There are no studies detailing

⁶⁵ Government of the Republic of Serbia, *Izveštaj o realizaciji Milenijumskih ciljeva razvoja u Srbiji*, footnote 48, p. 29.

⁶⁶ The average age of first-time Romani brides in Serbia was 24.2, compared to the national average of 25.7, according to the 2004 data of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia. Some Romani activists emphasize that early marriage is not an exclusively Romani custom in Serbia, and that it is not widespread in all Romani groups in Serbia. For more information on Romani cultural practices affecting women see: Ilić, Rozalija, "Položaj romskih žena u Srbiji" in: Stability Pact for South East Europe – Gender Task Force Regional Centre for Gender Equality. *Romkinje to mogu – Rromnja godoja šaj*. Belgrade: Stability Pact for South East Europe, 2003.

their situation, as it appears that they are missing from a vast majority of surveys, however it seems that most of them come from deeply impoverished families and are involved in begging to support themselves. Any attempts to integrate street children into the educational system would have to take into account the need for economic support as well.

Chart 12: The main reasons why Roma aged 6-22 do not attend school

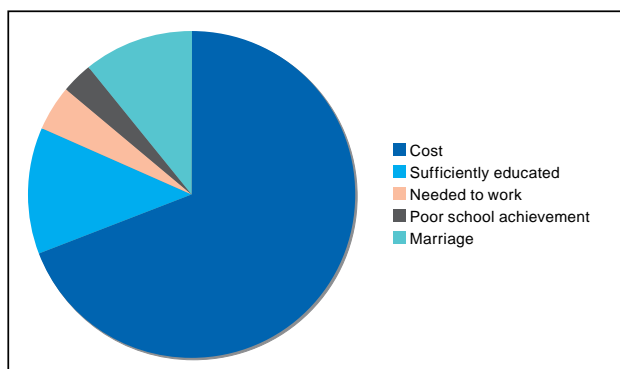
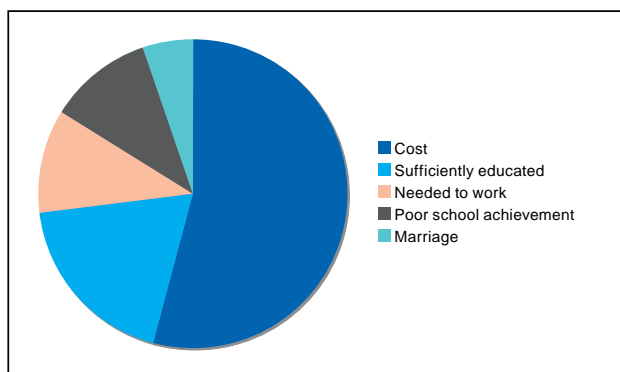


Chart 13: The main reasons why domicile non-Roma aged 6-22 do not attend school



The survey data also provide some illustration for the connection between the overrepresentation of Romani children in special schools for children with disabilities and the conditions in which their families live.⁶⁷ Among the 17 surveyed Romani persons aged 6-22 still attending such schools, in only one case the person in question had a real mental or physical disability from the point of view of other household members. Actually, the most common explanation for special school attendance was that the school programme was simpler and easier to cope with (in 5 cases), that the family was too poor to provide food for the child (in 4 cases), or that in this way the child will be provided with secure living (1). As a comparison, special school attendance by children from IDP and refugee households surveyed was explained exclusively by the existence of a mental or physical disability (2 out of a total of 3 cases) and was in no case justified by poverty-related reasons. Still, due to a small number of observations in this category, this data cannot be used to create general conclusions.

Romani activists also point out the issue of adult education. Unspecified numbers of Roma belatedly graduate from primary schools for adults, however they are unable to continue towards attending regular high schools because they have exceeded the age limitations; there are alternatives yet they are costly and out of reach for the great majority of Roma. The result of this situation is that many Roma aged 17-18, for instance, can neither find jobs nor continue with schooling. It is extremely difficult for such persons to find their place in the job markets because of their lack of formal skills, and it would be necessary for their employability to offer them some affordable ways of gaining qualifications.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ For more information on Romani children in special schools, see: European Roma Rights Centre and Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. *Memorandum: The Protection of Roma Rights in Serbia and Montenegro*. Belgrade: European Roma Rights Centre and Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2003.

⁶⁸ Consultations with Radmila Zečirović, NGO Zajedno-Khetane, and Petar Nikolić, Matica Romska, Novi Sad, 9 Dec 2005.



Common Plan for the Advancement of Roma Education

It is considered that children from the refugee and IDP population are well integrated into the educational system, and recently there have been no strategies aiming at these particular groups. When it comes to Romani children, the Joint Common Plan for the Advancement of Roma Education was prepared in 2004 by the Ministry of Education and Sport of Serbia, with the assistance of the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). It is the most elaborate of all the NAPs, adequately reflecting the importance of this key topic. Yet it could benefit from some improvements, primarily in terms of specifying implementing offices, monitoring frameworks, and the fact that a number of complex activities were envisaged for 2005 or 2005-2006, and will now start with a considerable delay. It provides for a sophisticated network of indicators where, still, some additions could be made.

The NAP on education would benefit from the inclusion of indicators on the numbers of Romani children from the families of unsuccessful asylum seekers returned from Western Europe that have been included in the educational system. There is no available data on the numbers of these children, but it can be safely said that this is a growing group that will in the coming years continue to increase the number of vulnerable persons in the country, as the state institutions approved the return to Serbia and Montenegro of up to 150,000 persons from countries with which readmission agreements have been signed.⁶⁹ The children of returnees have difficulties accessing education because of the lack of appropriate documents required for school enrolment, because many of them do not speak Serbian, and because they are sent to classes that they have already passed due to the difference between the educational systems they came from and that of Serbia.⁷⁰ In addition to the problem of the returnee children's education, it must be noted that the economic and social situation of the returnees as a whole is particularly dire.⁷¹

Also, in the field of systematic monitoring of Roma children's progress, the indicators to be developed should measure functional literacy skills, and not merely rely on the self-identification of the respondents. It has been reported that the Institute for Estimating the Quality of Education and the Serbian Ministry of Education and Sport are working on establishing the standards of students' achievement by the end of their obligatory formal education.⁷² Applying such standards to measure the quality of education given to Romani children – as it is often considered substandard – would certainly be of use. Indicators on the usage of works by Romani authors in Serbian schools would also be welcome.

With regards to teacher training, additional indicators on trainings on human rights of Roma, particularly in the field of education, could help combat discrimination of Roma in classrooms. According to governmental sources, affirmative action supported the enrolment of 70 high school students and 89 college and university students of Romani origin in the academic year 2004/5,⁷³ however supporting secondary and tertiary Roma education should go a step further and include financial support to the eligible ones: The NAP indicators on the numbers of

⁶⁹ Ministry of Human and Minority Rights. "Sporazumi o readmisiji", available at: <http://www.humanrights.gov.yu>.

⁷⁰ Group 484. *Return from Western Europe of Nationals of Serbia and Montenegro who were not granted asylum or whose temporary protection ended*. Belgrade: Group 484, 2005.

⁷¹ In February 2006, the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights opened the Readmission Office at the Belgrade airport, with the aim of providing legal aid and interventional humanitarian assistance to returnees. It is planned that the Office would create a relevant database on returnees, to serve as a basis for the launching of special projects in municipalities with the highest concentration of returnees. ("Na Zapadu nelegalno 250 hiljada državljana SCG", *Danas*, 13 Feb 2006)

⁷² *Reporter*, Belgrade, 9 Nov 2005, p. 39.

⁷³ Government of the Republic of Serbia. "Prvi izveštaj o implementaciji Strategije za smanjenje siromaštva u Srbiji". Belgrade: Government of the Republic of Serbia, 2005, p. 47.

Romani college and university students and scholarships and stipends awarded, especially in the academic fields related to education, could measure the participation of Roma in tertiary education and follow the progress of future Romani teachers, pedagogues and other experts. Generally, indicators related to the teaching staff and their trainings should always include the indicators of Romani participants, to monitor Roma participation in the NAP implementation processes.

The participation of Roma in the educational system cannot be limited to literal school attendance. Both the Constitution of the Republic of Serbia and the Law on the Rights and Freedoms of National Minorities give Roma the right to education in their mother tongue.⁷⁴ Moreover, Roma culture and literature should become part of the mainstream curricula for all pupils and students, and at the moment there is already a considerable range of literature produced by Romani authors and Romani NGOs on various Roma-related topics that could serve this purpose. These works are invisible in the eyes of the wider audience, yet could make an important contribution in improving both Roma education, and the education about Roma. The current educational system in Serbia is highly mono-cultural whereas young people, especially in mixed communities, should be brought up in the spirit of inter-culturalism. These measures could not only encourage Roma attendance by giving legitimacy to their people's achievements, but also help eliminate the discrimination of Roma by creating a link between the two communities.

Enshrined in the official educational framework, the NAP remains within the borders of formal education. Nevertheless, all around Serbia, civic associations implement countless education projects that belong to the informal sphere. Their main advantage is their flexibility: there are no limits posed by age, personal documents, registered residence, or previous schooling. While informal educational projects prepare their beneficiaries for the formal system, or complement the latter, their lack of strict hierarchy additionally allows them more freedom and creativity to follow the spirit of the time and expand their activities into the wider realm of contemporary concerns. For example, the Roma Education Centre in Niš has seven years of rich experience in implementing educational projects, including innovative activities such as teaching teachers about Roma culture and history, or educating Romani teenagers on reproductive health and substance abuse. In their experience, informal activities not only resulted in positive educational achievements in Roma education, but also contributed to the social integration of young Roma generally. Many organizations offer educational projects that also directly aim at the economic empowerment of their clients, such as the aforementioned project of Bibija, or projects of the Democratic Union of Roma, based in Belgrade, who offered occupational courses to young Romani men and women, thus improving their education, employability and also self-confidence. Thanks to informal education projects implemented by Romani and other NGOs, there has been a notable increase in the awareness of importance of a systemic approach to the education of Romani children and youth. Because of this connection between formal and informal education, informal projects should remain an important part of coordinated efforts in the Roma education field.

⁷⁴ See Article 32(4) of the Serbian Constitution, and articles 13 and 14 of the Law on National Minorities. Additionally, the Serbian Law on Primary Schools also regulates education in minority languages. In this survey, Romani was the language mostly spoken in 73 percent of Romani households, while 86 Romani households stated that Romani was one of the languages they speak.

⁷⁵ Roma Information Centre. *Izveštaj o radu kragujevačkog tima za izradu lokalne strategije za obrazovanje Roma*. Kragujevac: Roma Information Centre, 2005.

Box 5: Thinking nationally, acting locally: Municipal education strategies

Education is the only way to break the vicious circle of Romani poverty, according to the activists of the Kragujevac-based NGO Roma Information Centre (RIC). Yet, working on Roma education is not possible without a broader reform of the educational system and its related institutions, and one attempt to address this problem is the Common Action Plan for the Advancement of Roma Education. Realizing the need to act locally, RIC launched an initiative to implement this strategy in their city. As a result of their lobbying, in the end of 2003 the city of Kragujevac embarked on creating a local strategy adopted to the particular needs of their Romani community. A team of experts was formed, including representatives of the city but also staff members of educational institutions on all levels, and activists from NGOs. The result of their work was the first local Roma education strategy in Serbia.

The strategy described the Roma educational situation in Kragujevac in the framework of exclusion from education, low quality of Roma schooling, discrimination and segregation, and lack of room for Roma identity. The aims and objectives of the strategy were defined in five areas, covering Roma inclusion into education, motivating the community's educational needs, promotion of tolerance and diversity, promotion of Roma culture(s), and eradicating unemployment. The special educational situation of Romani women also called for a number of gender-specific measures targeting both girls and women from the community. The strategy also included a list of relevant projects implemented at the time, which could serve as examples of good practices to those wishing to launch similar initiatives. It was officially adopted by the city authorities in June 2004.

Since then, RIC organized meetings with the principals of all Kragujevac schools to introduce them to the local Roma education strategy. From June to September 2005, RIC implemented an action named "Together in School", stressing the importance of education, placing posters in schools and suitable locations in the town, and organizing media events. They also published a report outlining the complete strategy creation process, which offers guidance to activists who would like to launch similar initiatives in other cities.⁷⁵ As a consequence of their public efforts, RIC has been approached by municipal authorities, who are interested in implementing joint Roma education projects. The management of Kragujevac kindergartens also expressed a vivid interest in projects related to Romani children.

In the city of Niš, where the local Romani population is estimated at 15-20,000, only 1195 Romani pupils (5.38% of the total number of pupils) attended primary schools in the academic year 2003/4, and 163 students (1.07%) attended high



schools. Two special schools for children with special needs include 30 Romani students (15.5%). At the university level, only 45 students (1.18%) of the University of Niš are Romani. Generally, the main problems related to Roma education in Niš are identified as poor school attendance and early dropout, poor educational performance, discrimination and segregation of Roma, the lack of space for their cultural identity, and consequent high unemployment. The local authorities, relevant institutions and Roma NGOs of Niš therefore decided to take action and commence it with adjusting the National Action Plan to the local needs. The result is the City of Niš Roma Education Strategy, whose aims and tasks envisage including Roma in education processes and enabling continuous education on all levels; increasing the performance of Romani students; including tolerance and diversity in both the curricula and the community; creating conditions for the affirmation of Romani culture in schools and the community; and increasing Roma employment rates. The strategy includes a detailed list of activities to be undertaken in the course of its implementation, but also a list of activities to monitor and evaluate the strategy's results.⁷⁶

Similarly, in Valjevo, the Roma Centre for Democracy cooperated with the Roma Forum – a coalition of Roma NGOs, Roma political parties and Roma media – and relevant state institutions (schools, social work centres, the National Employment Agency, and the municipality) to conduct a research on Roma education, and consequently created the Local Action Plan for Roma Education. The practical implementation of this plan commenced after the Municipality of Valjevo adopted a budget of 500,000 dinars (around 5,815 EUR) in January 2006, earmarked for this purpose. These experiences emphasize the importance of direct and close cooperation between the civil society, state institutions and the local economy. Applying nation-wide strategies on a local level gives support to national processes aimed at Roma empowerment, yet it still takes into account and addresses the needs of the local community, with the help and experience of local activists and experts.

SOURCES: ROMA INFORMATION CENTRE (RIC), ROMA CENTRE FOR DEMOCRACY, RADIO TOČAK AND THE CITY OF NIŠ ROMA EDUCATION STRATEGY

Having this synergy in mind, one more issue that is important to note in respect of education in the Roma Decade is the creation of the Roma Education Fund (REF), based in Budapest. The main goal of REF, formed in 2005 as a part of the Roma Decade activities with funds provided by private foundations and multilateral agencies, is to make a contribution towards closing the educational gap between Roma and non-Roma, which would include desegregation of educational systems. One of its main functions is grant-making with both private and public educational sectors as beneficiaries, primarily in the region of the Roma Decade participant states but also any other member state of the Council of Europe. Its main focus is on grants aimed at systematic reform and educational improvements for Roma, grants to pilot and test Roma educational interventions, and grants to analyse Roma education issues and help develop policies and institutional capacity. In its first round of decisions, REF approved two major projects submitted from Serbia: In the project “Expanding Access to Pre-school Education for Roma Children,” the National Council of Roma and the Ministry of Education will give small grants to institutions applying for Roma preschool education projects. In the second project approved by REF, the Institute of Andragogy and Pedagogy at the Faculty of Philosophy in Belgrade, together with the National Council of Roma, the Ministry of Education and other institutions will develop projects in 20 schools assisting young adult Roma who have not completed their basic education.⁷⁷ The implementation of these projects will commence in 2006.

⁷⁶ The City of Niš. *Strategija obrazovanja Roma*. Niš: The City of Niš, 2005.

⁷⁷ For more information on REF and their approved grants, see: <http://www.romaeducationfund.org>.

THE HEALTH SITUATION OF VULNERABLE GROUPS

Limitations in the access to health care ⁷⁸

The subjective perception of the health of the UNDP vulnerability survey respondents in Serbia followed the regional moderate trend of slight deterioration: the majority of respondents in all groups felt that their health was on the same level as the year before – 74 percent of the domicile non-Roma respondents, 68 percent of Roma, and 58 percent of the refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs), compared to 3, 5 and 7 percent respectively who stated that their health was now much worse.

Table 4: The current health of the household member, compared to the year before

Base: Those who are 1+ years old	Domicile non-Roma		Roma		R/IDPs	
Total	1262	100%	1734	100%	1540	100%
(5) Much worse	37	3%	81	5%	114	7%
(4) Somewhat worse	182	14%	250	14%	269	17%
(3) About the same	932	74%	1181	68%	894	58%
(2) Somewhat better	37	3%	54	3%	88	6%
(1) Much better	40	3%	104	6%	67	4%
Refused/Don't know	34	3%	64	4%	108	7%
Average score	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.1	3.2	3.2

Among the respondents who declared that they suffered from chronic illnesses, which was 20 percent of the domicile non-Roma and Roma and 23 percent of refugees, the most common chronic illnesses reported were high blood pressure (30 percent domicile non-Roma, followed by 19 percent Roma and 18 percent refugees/IDPs), followed by bronchitis and emphysema (21 percent Roma, 14 percent refugees/IDPs and 7 percent domicile non-Roma), and other cardiovascular diseases (16 percent Roma, 14 percent domicile non-Roma, 13 percent refugees/IDPs). The most serious sicknesses that the respondents encountered in the previous twelve months were cold and influenza, with 32 percent of domicile non-Roma, 30 percent of Roma and 28 percent refugees/IDPs, and 17 percent domicile non-Roma, 12 percent Roma and 14 percent refugees/IDPs respectively. Psychological problems were reported by four percent of the refugees and IDPs surveyed, compared to 1 percent domicile non-Roma and 2 percent Roma; medical professionals working in this field state that these are most commonly cases of neurosis and depression, due to long-term stress caused by their economic and social insecurity.

Still, all these data are based on the results of subjective evaluations of the health state of the person interviewed. It has been noted that among the general population health self-assessments highly correlate with objective assessments, however this is not the case among Roma, where only very severe afflictions – such as, for example, those that render a person bed-ridden – might be taken seriously, indicating that the “percentage of those with poor health is much higher than the one obtained by self-assessment”.⁷⁹ This could serve as an explanation why the data obtained through subjective assessment might vastly differ from the objective opinions of medical experts, especially in the case of Roma health.

A number of members of vulnerable groups do not seek or do not receive proper treatment, and access to health care appears limited to the surveyed groups. Out of those who had been affected by an illness, only 57 percent of Roma, and 64 percent of refugees/IDPs and the domicile non-Roma sought the help of a doctor. Twelve percent of all refugees and IDPs, and 10 percent of Roma, compared to only 2 percent of the domicile non-Roma, experienced a situation where they were denied medical services because they did not have proper personal documents. In the case of Roma, there are also indications that sometimes there is

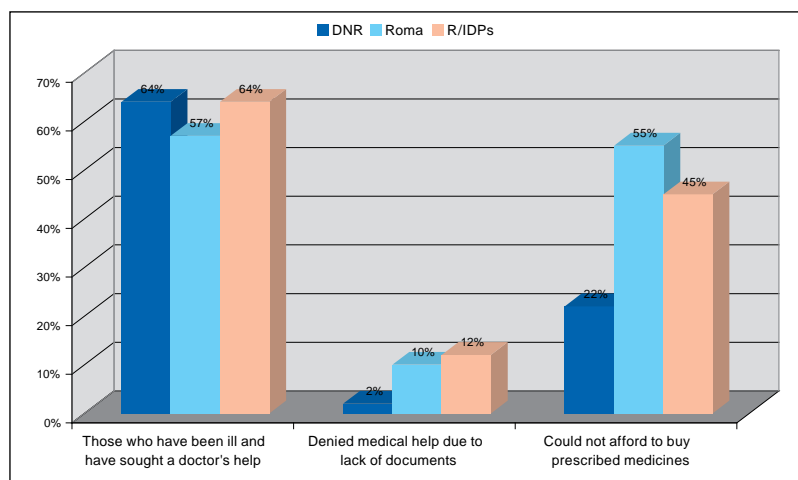
⁷⁸ For more information on international and national human rights law with regards to the right to health, see European Roma Rights Centre and Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. *Memorandum: The Protection of Roma Rights in Serbia and Montenegro*. Belgrade: European Roma Rights Centre and Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2003, p. 29.

⁷⁹ OXFAM. “Roma Health: Final Report.” Belgrade: Oxfam, 2003, p. 4.



not enough trust in state institutions and medical professionals, which causes that some Roma do not seek medical assistance.

Chart 14: Accessing health care



The financial situation of vulnerable groups definitely affects their health as well: In the past year, over a half of the Romani respondents (55 percent), slightly less refugees and IDPs (45 percent) and roughly a fifth of the domicile non-Roma population (22 percent) could not afford to buy the medicines prescribed for a family member. Generally, expenditures related to healthcare weigh more heavily on Roma and IDPs/refugees, representing 5 percent of monthly expenditures of Romani households and 7 percent for refugee and IDP households, compared to the domicile non-Romani average of 4 percent. NGO activists have noted that the realization of the right to health care is one of the most common problems of IDPs/refugees.⁸⁰ In theory, all IDPs are entitled to health care services provided by the state, as they are citizens of Serbia, yet the deterioration of the health system in Serbia rendered the services offered to a minimum.

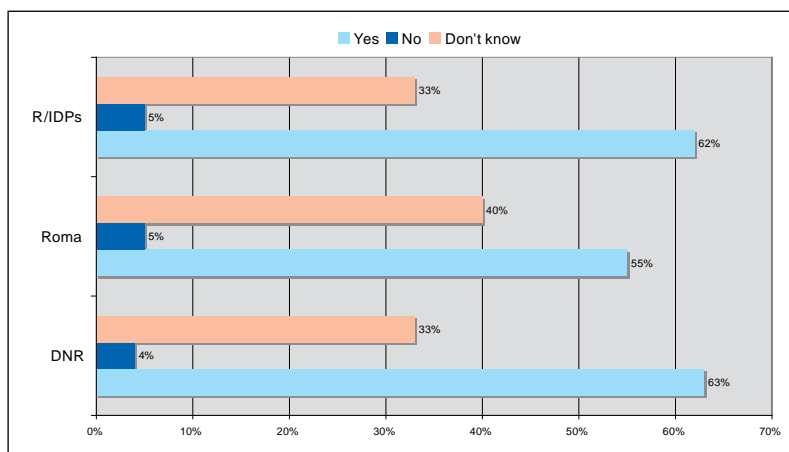
Among the children aged 14 and under, only 55 percent of Roma, 62 percent of refugees/IDPs and 63 percent of the domicile non-Roma were confirmed to having been immunized against polio, diphtheria, tetanus and whooping cough. Comparatively, national averages for one-year-olds immunized against polio were 96 percent in 2004, and for those immunized against diphtheria, tetanus and whooping cough 96 and 97 percent respectively for the DPT1 vaccine and the following DPT3 re-vaccine against diphtheria, tetanus and whooping cough.⁸¹ The Centre for Prevention and Control of Infectious Diseases of the Public Health Institute of Serbia conducted a 2002-2005 programme on the immunization of marginalized group, supported by UNICEF. In the programme implementation, they realised that 10-15 percent of children under the age of 14 they encountered – 36,611 children – had not been immunized; only a half of these children could be belatedly immunized.⁸²

⁸⁰ See Amity, footnote 13.

⁸¹ UNICEF, "Serbia and Montenegro: Statistics", available at: <http://www.unicef.org>.

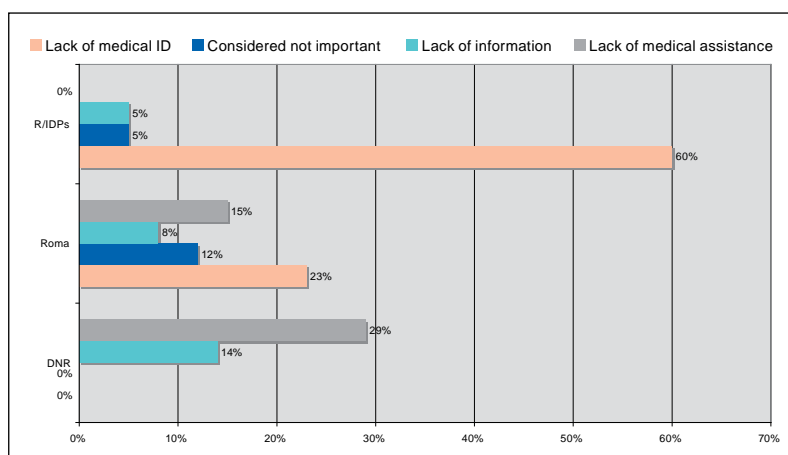
⁸² "Deset odsto dece nije vakcinisano", *Danas*, 17 Oct 2005.

Chart 15: The immunization of children aged 14 and less



According to the UNDP survey, among those who were not vaccinated, an alarming majority of 60 percent refugees and IDPs, compared to zero cases among the domicile non-Roma, stated that it was the case due to their lack of documents. In the Romani community, the lack of valid documents was the reason why 23 percent of children were not vaccinated; others were prevented by a lack of medical assistance (15 percent) or adequate information (8 percent), while 12 percent did not consider vaccination important.⁸³ It is interesting to note that high percentages of interviewees refused or did not know the answer to this question – 40 percent of Roma, and 33 percent of the IDP/refugee and the domicile non-Romani population respectively, showing the need for awareness raising among these communities on this particular issue of child health care. In relation to that, many sources also highlight the need for stronger awareness raising on health concerns among Roma.

Chart 16: The reasons why children were not vaccinated



It has been estimated that the demographic groups under highest health risk among Roma in Serbia are children and pregnant women.⁸⁴ Women from marginalized communities face particular concerns in terms of protecting their reproductive health, and in some countries of central Europe questions have been raised about disproportionate numbers of Romani women who have undergone reproduction-related medical procedures without having given their informed consent.⁸⁵ Because of these concerns, questions related to informed consent and reproductive health were included into the questionnaire for the UNDP vulnerability study in the whole region. In the case of Serbia, 10 out of 661 surveyed Romani women confirmed being advised to have an abortion without being informed of possible consequences such as infections, haemorrhages, or possible effect on future pregnancies, and also not being asked whether they agreed to the procedure

⁸³ The Public Health Institute/UNICEF program included the registration of unregistered children. (UNICEF. *Progress for Children: A Report Card on Immunization*. No. 3, Geneva, Sept 2005, p. 18).

⁸⁴ "Niški Romi: Ciganski život", *Vreme*, 17 Nov 2005, p. 32-3.

⁸⁵ For more information on coercive sterilization of Romani women in Slovakia and the Czech Republic, see *Roma Rights*, No. 3 and 4, 2004, pp. 103-14, available at: <http://errc.org>.



Box 6: Assisting refugees and IDPs: A nationwide programme

Since 1998, the UNHCR supported a medical project aimed at the health improvement of the most vulnerable refugees and IDPs and their integration in the state health system. Initially implemented jointly with the International Rescue Committee (IRC) and a number of local partner NGOs, including the Novi Sad Humanitarian Centre (NSHC) and expert networks, as of 2004 the project was implemented with the Danish Refugee Council (DRC). The project included field visits by medical workers to refugees and IDPs accommodated in remote collective centres, offering them counselling and, in case of need, basic medicines not available under the regular health system. During the years when state pharmacies were mostly empty, the distribution of medicines proved of valuable assistance and practically the most attractive part of the programme for many. The project also covered the purchase of more expensive medicines, orthopaedic aids, or the payment for special medical procedures for those most needy.

Nowadays, the project scope has been significantly reduced, following the overall changes and improvements brought by the democratic transition. The assistance is offered on a case by case basis, only to the most severe instances and in accordance with a set criterion. Special attention is given to the situation of women, children and the elderly whose medical needs have not been met; the project also involves advocating with the most relevant state institutions. A considerable concern with regards to the general social framework in which this project operates is that it is the only one which still supports the medical needs of refugees and IDPs nationwide, yet the needs still largely overshadow the reduced abilities to help, and the integration of the vulnerable groups into the mainstream Serbian health care system lags behind the expectations.

SOURCES: DANISH REFUGEE COUNCIL (DRC), NOVI SAD HUMANITARIAN CENTRE (NSHC), AND UNHCR

or not, compared to 3 such cases out of 576 surveyed women from the domicile non-Romani respondents, and 2 of 626 refugee and IDP women. None of the Romani women in question completed secondary school education, and 60 percent of them had no schooling at all, or had at best attended some primary school classes, which gives food for thought that better education might have made them less vulnerable to medical malpractice.⁸⁶

The substandard housing conditions contribute to the deterioration of the vulnerable groups' health: Almost a half of the surveyed Romani population in Serbia (49 percent) live in ruined houses or slums, which is the case with 15 percent of refugees and IDPs, and only 5 percent of the domicile non-Roma respondents. Access to water is another factor that influences the health situation: while 98 percent of the domicile non-Roma respondents had piped potable water in their dwellings, this was the case with only 82 percent refugees and IDPs, and with the Roma population 77 percent. A third of the Roma (32 percent) and a quarter of the refugee/IDP respondents households did not have proper inside sewerage for waste water disposal, compared to only 3 percent of the domicile non-Roma in such circumstances. Consequently, diseases caused by poor sanitation constitute a considerable threat to Romani population (3.2), compared to refugees and IDPs (2.9), and the domicile non-Roma (1.7), on a scale from the lowest level of threat equal to 1, to the highest level of 5.

Improving the health of vulnerable communities

The health care of refugees and IDPs has not been the subject of the *National Strategy for Resolving the Problems of Refugees and IDPs*, yet these groups are taken into account as vulnerable groups in the Poverty Reduction Strategy that need to be given particular attention. As for the Romani community, an expert group created the National Action Plan on Health, adopted in January 2005.

The plan commences with envisaging a nation-wide research creating the data base on the current state of Roma health, including basic indicators disaggregated by gender and age. This is very important for the sake of monitoring the health situation of the most vulnerable among the vulnerable: women, children and the elderly. Regarding that, a number of Roma in our survey reported concerns with regards to accessing medical staff and the necessary drugs, it would be useful if the future research could also include indicators for the access to health care, including the incidence of discrimination cases and reports

⁸⁶ Due to a small number of observations in this regard, this data should not form basis for general observations – wider-scale statistical surveys would be needed to adequately measure the existence of this phenomenon in Serbia.

on actions taken. According to the NAP, the creation of this database was slated for 2005, and – as mentioned earlier – it is another illustration for the need to have revised time frames within the NAPs.

In terms of improving the health situation of Roma, the plan includes measures that would introduce health workers to the needs, culture and diversity among Roma – this measure and its consequent indicators could also include basic human rights education among the medical personnel, where they could be introduced to the right to health, and recognizing and combating discrimination in the field of health. With regards to the environment of Romani communities, the analysis of hygienic and epidemiological conditions will be undertaken, however the indicators could also include references to the numbers of Romani families who live in areas under environmental risk or who have daily contact with such areas. In many places of Serbia there are Romani families who live and/or work on open dumps, as they collect second hand materials to be sold for recycling. As mentioned earlier, this segment of the Romani population suffers a particularly high risk for their health and their conditions merit special medical attention. For example, in the Romani settlement of Veliki Rit, in Novi Sad, where many inhabitants engage in collecting second hand materials from urban waste, there is an estimate that as many as 50 percent are infected with the tuberculosis bacillus and under a high risk of developing tuberculosis at some point.⁸⁷ This also illustrates the worsened position that vulnerable communities start from – in addition to an open system making quality services available to all, special efforts to counter the dangers to health particularly targeting the vulnerable ones are necessary.

The NAP on health draws on a limited pool of research resources and, as it was the case with previous NAPs, does not specify the implementing agencies. As for the monitors of the plan's implementation, there remain pending concerns for their limited financial and human resources and ability. On the other hand, health issues are undoubtedly the most difficult issues to monitor by ethnicity, particularly with regards to marginalized communities such as Roma. The approach aiming at improvements should be area focused, targeting areas with higher concentrations of population at risk. Improving access to health services for vulnerable groups would need to have two equally important components. One would be bringing down individually related barriers, which are often discriminatory. The second, and perhaps more important component, would be improving the public services provisions in the health area, making quality health care available to as wide a strata of population as possible. There is a considerable need for outreach services with a focus on more efficient and effective service delivery, based on building the capacities of local public institutions.

In some cases, local strategies have again been proposed in order to address the Roma health situation in a concrete manner. In Novi Sad, for example, the Minority Rights Centre – a Belgrade-based Roma rights organization – and experts of the Novi Sad Health Centre, a state institution, created a draft local action plan for the health care of Roma in Novi Sad,⁸⁸ as of the time this report was written, the draft action plan was not adopted by the relevant authorities.

With regards to the aforementioned adoption of the NAP budgets at the end of the first year of the Roma Decade, the total budget of 60 million dinars (around 686,500 EUR) has been approved for the implementation of the health NAP in 2006. The largest portion of the budget – 50 million dinars (around 571,400 EUR) – will be spent on healthy lifestyles promotion, quality nourishment programmes, immunization, prevention of infectious diseases and substance abuse, pregnancy monitoring and reproductive health. A further 8,000,000 dinars (around 91,400 EUR) have been earmarked for the planned research database on Roma health and the training of health workers and Roma health mediators. Two million dinars (22,800 EUR) will be spent on educating members of the Romani community how to exercise their right to health care.⁸⁹ A considerable share of the total budget will be spent through projects implemented by eligible organizations, and as of June 2006 the Ministry issued an open call for applications for projects related to Roma health that would be implemented jointly by health institutions and Roma non-governmental organizations, with the financial support of the Ministry.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Jovanović, Tanja. "Romi i pravo na zdravstvenu zaštitu u Novom Sadu". Belgrade: Minority Rights Centre, 2005, p. 3. Correspondence with Dejan Dimitrov, Roma Students Association, Novi Sad, 9 Dec 2005.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 12-4.

⁸⁹ Presentation of Đorđe Stojiljković, MD, Ministry of Health of the Republic of Serbia, "Budžet za programe u okviru Akcionog plana za zdravstvo u okviru Dekade Roma za 2006. godinu," at the conference "Javno zdravstvo u Srbiji i Dekada inkluzije Roma", organized by the PALGO Centre, Belgrade, 21 Dec 2005.

⁹⁰ Ministry of Health of the Republic of Serbia, "Ministarstvo zdravlja upućuje javni poziv za prijavu projekata radi ostvarivanja učešća u sredstvima iz budžeta za finansijsku podršku namenjenim očuvanju i unapređenju zdravlja Roma za 2006. godinu," available at: <http://www.zdravlje.sr.gov.yu>.



HOUSING CONCERNS AFFECTING VULNERABLE GROUPS

Insufficient and insecure: housing conditions

The housing conditions are a major problem for a large number of members of vulnerable communities in Serbia, and their living conditions tend to be substandard. Many Roma live on the margins of majority habitats, in dwellings made of cheap materials such as cardboard or tin sheets: only 28 percent of 593 Romani settlements registered in Serbia in 2002 were built in accordance with urban planning rules.⁹¹ In the UNDP vulnerability survey, as much as 98 percent of surveyed Roma had lived in the same location for the past 15 years, compared to 90 percent of domicile non-Roma, which contradicts the still prevailing stereotypes about the nomadic lifestyles of Roma. Additionally, out of those Romani households who did change locations, 50 percent did it for safety reasons, as they were forced to move.

Unfortunately, as the survey results also show, a half of surveyed Romani households does not have access to secure housing (i.e. live in slums or ruined houses), or improved sanitation (having a toilet or bathroom inside the house).⁹² Comparatively, this is the case with only 15 percent refugees and IDPs and 5 percent of the domicile non-Romani respondents. While 98 percent of domicile respondents had potable water in their dwellings, 82 percent of refugee households and 77 percent of Romani households were in the same situation. Electricity supply was not available to only 1 percent of the domicile population surveyed, but 5 percent of Romani and 7 percent of refugee/IDP households. Only 36 percent of refugee and IDP households own their dwelling, compared to 90 percent of Roma and 89 percent of domicile non-Romani respondents who live in homes of their own. In addition, 5 percent of Roma, 3 percent of refugees/IDPs and 2 percent of non-Romani domicile households surveyed stated that the ownership of the land on which they lived was unregulated; many Romani activists criticize the current legalization procedures and the alleged rigidity of state institutions.⁹³ Among the surveyed refugees/IDPs, 24 percent lived in collective accommodation. Numerous households do not have security of tenure: 14 percent of Roma households perceive evictions as a threat of highest level, and among refugee and IDP households the number reaches 26 percent, practically a quarter of the community.⁹⁴ In comparison, the domicile non-Roma respondents saw evictions as a most serious threat in only 5 percent of cases.

⁹¹ Ministry of Human and Minority Rights and Ethnicity Research Centre, footnote 18, p. 10 and p. 18.

⁹² In Romani settlements which do not have access to sanitation or water sources there is a considerably higher risk of contracting infectious and other diseases, especially regarding the fact that vaccination was confirmed for only 55 percent of Romani children surveyed. It would be of great importance to improve vaccination records in such settlements.

⁹³ UNDP consultation meeting in Novi Sad, 9 Dec 2005.

⁹⁴ On the average, IDPs reportedly changed places of residence four times since their first displacement, often due to evictions because they could not pay their bills. (Global IDP Project, footnote 46)

Table 5: Living conditions

	Domicile non-Roma	Roma	R/IDPs
Insecure housing	5%	50%	15%
Potable water in dwelling	98%	77%	82%
Own their dwelling	89%	90%	36%
Unregulated ownership of land	2%	5%	3%
Consider eviction highest threat	5%	14%	26%

According to the UNDP vulnerability study results, vulnerable communities also tend to have larger households, and average households in vulnerable groups have up to 1.2 members more (4.4 for Roma, and 3.9 for refugees and IDPs) than an average domicile non-Romani household living in close proximity to Roma (3.2), compared to the national average of 2.97 household members reported in the 2002 census. Regarding refugee and IDP households, some 15 percent do not have secure housing, and 35 percent households do not have proper sanitation. Whereas most households of the domicile non-Romani population (44 percent) live in dwellings sized 51-75m², the dwellings of vulnerable groups' households are at best up to 50m² (for 66 percent of refugees and IDPs, and 61 percent of Roma). On the average, in Romani or refugee/IDP dwellings there was 11m² per household member, compared to 22m² in domicile non-Romani households surveyed.

Refugee and IDP households surveyed spent a third of their monthly income on housing, while for Romani households these expenditures amount to a quarter of their total household's monthly income; it should be noted here that the number of IDPs and refugees who do not own the dwelling in which they live is 64 percent, compared to 10 percent Roma, and where the former have more significant rent expenses. The cost of utilities related to housing present a significant financial burden for vulnerable groups, and 54 percent of Romani and 24 percent of refugee and IDP households have some sort of outstanding housing-related monthly payments. One third of Romani households have outstanding payments for water and 49 percent have not covered their electricity bills. The situation of refugee and IDP families is more similar to the domicile non-Romani population: 14 percent have outstanding water bills, compared to 13 percent of domicile non-Romani households, and roughly a fifth of refugee and a quarter of domicile households has outstanding electricity bills. Average length of outstanding payments among vulnerable groups reaches up to 15 months in some cases. Among the households which have outstanding payments, the average amounts owed for electricity bills, for instance, reach up to 394 EUR per Romani household, compared to the national net monthly salary of around 225 EUR, and especially considering that the vulnerability survey data show that most Roma earn well below this amount.

Chart 17: Outstanding housing bills

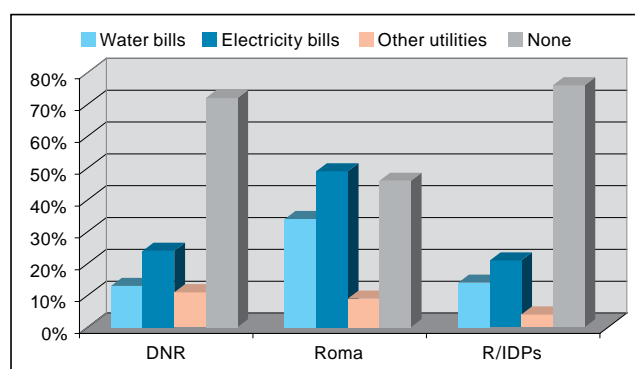
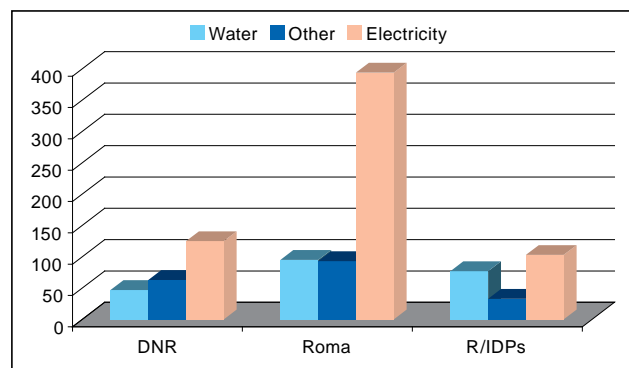




Chart 18: The total amount due for outstanding housing bills in EUR



The means of communication are also more restricted for members of Roma and IDP/refugee community groups: only 31 percent Romani and 36 percent refugees and IDP households have fixed phones, compared to 86 percent of domicile non-Romani households. Thirty-three percent of Romani, 55 percent of refugee/IDP and 74 percent of domicile non-Romani households have mobile phones. For every 100 Romani households there are only 6 computers; for refugees and IDPs, the number slightly rises to 13, compared to the domicile non-Roma average of 38. Internet access is available to 2 percent Romani and 6 percent refugee and IDP households, while the share of domicile non-Romani households with internet connections amounts to 29 percent.

Resolving the housing crisis

The housing situation is a burning problem for many citizens of Serbia, yet it is beyond doubt that vulnerable groups belong to the top of those who are in the most critical circumstances. Within its framework for the provision of conditions for local integration, the 2002 *National Strategy for Resolving the Problems of Refugees and IDPs* envisaged providing affordable conditions for constructing and purchasing privately owned apartments, providing social housing for the extremely vulnerable, and accommodation in institutions of medical and social welfare.⁹⁵ As a result of this, the Social and Refugee-Related Housing Secretariat was established, as a part of the then Ministry of Urban Planning and Construction, and with the support of the international community (including UNDP, UNHCR and the Stability Pact for South East Europe). Since the role of the Secretariat has never been institutionalized, and the new government was not keen on establishing an ad-hoc structure, the Secretariat ceased its activities in February 2004.

In early 2005, a new three-year Settlement and Integration of Refugees Project (SIRP) was launched by the Serbian Ministry of Capital Investments, with the aim of providing accommodation for refugees, who intend to apply for Serbian citizenship, and socially vulnerable local population in seven cities in Serbia.⁹⁶ This project is implemented with the support of the UN Human Settlements Programme (UN Habitat), the Government of Italy, and also the municipalities of Valjevo, Čačak, Pančevo, Stara Pazova and Kraljevo, and the cities of Kragujevac and Niš, where the social housing construction will be carried out. Over the course of 2006 and

⁹⁵ Government of the Republic of Serbia. *National Strategy for Resolving the Problems of Refugees and Internally Displaced Persons*. Belgrade: Government of the Republic of Serbia, 2002, pp. 8-9.

⁹⁶ As of December 2005 the rules and criteria for the selection of beneficiaries were under preparation. (*SIRP Newsletter Issue*, No. 01/05, Dec 2005, p. 3)

2007, 670 flats will be built for the socially vulnerable.⁹⁷ It is planned that 80 percent of the housing will be built for refugees, including former refugees, and the remaining 20 percent for the local vulnerable population.⁹⁸ In addition, SIRP will, inter alia, support Municipal Housing Strategies and Action Plans, develop Municipal Sectoral Strategies for Development, provide direct support packages to housing beneficiaries, finance pilot projects for the integration of socially vulnerable and local development, and improve municipal and social information systems.⁹⁹ While the Romani population will not directly benefit from this program, Roma integration will be prioritised in the objectives of the future Municipal Housing Strategies and subsequent actions.¹⁰⁰

Addressing the Roma housing situation is also important: The National Action Plan on Housing, adopted in January 2005, calls for the development of housing policies, sustainable development of Romani settlements and improving their legal status, and slum removal. With regards to the latter, recent experiences from Belgrade, where the local population successfully blocked the possibility of Roma families being moved to their neighbourhood, offer a lesson to be learnt. Namely, in July 2005, the City of Belgrade announced plans that the inhabitants of an illegal Romani settlement would be moved to another part of the city, in the Novi Beograd area. At first, the Roma would be temporarily housed in containers, while proper flats would be built for them. The plans also envisaged the construction of schools and other relevant infrastructure. The inhabitants of the designated area, however, vehemently opposed the plan, and launched daily protests, which received wide media coverage and caused a heated debate in the society. Eventually, the plans were suspended. Generally, the hampering of plans for Roma resettlement, caused by strong majority prejudices against Roma, has been noted negatively in the evaluations of the country's progress towards the European Union as well.¹⁰¹ Evidently, slum removal is not just a city planning measure but needs to include tolerance building in the wider society as well – otherwise, plans might face delays and even failures. Additionally, when planning slum removal, it would be important to respect the element of social inclusion of Roma – moving a marginalized community from one isolated location to another will not remove the plight of their continued segregation. The income generating activities of the particular community also need to be taken into account, in case that they require providing a certain kind of space. On the other hand, Roma should be given full participation in the decision-making processes that affect their community in the area of housing but also any other field as well.

The plan also initiates the idea of moving interested Romani families to abandoned villages in Serbia. The relevant indicator relates to the families with over ten members. According to civil society activists, in Vojvodina there is a considerable interest among the refugee population for buying abandoned houses. A successful example of resolving the refugee housing situation is a project of the municipality of Bač in Vojvodina from 2003, where selected refugee families obtained loans from a commercial bank, yet with the guarantees given by the municipality, for the purchase of 40 abandoned village houses.¹⁰² Still, this kind of approach raises questions whether the same strategy could be applied to Romani communities with the same results: the possibilities of income making at the new locations would have to be carefully assessed before attempting to implement this kind of action.

For a certain share of measures in the housing NAP more detailed time frames have been provided, but unfortunately not all. As for monitoring mechanisms, the issue of capacity needs to be raised again – it emphasizes the need for improving housing-related cadres among Roma, primarily the participation of Romani experts and professionals in the NAP implementation processes. By the time this report was drafted, the city of Belgrade has allocated 58 lots for social housing, including Romani beneficiaries, and provided means for their construction.¹⁰³ One municipality in Serbia was legalizing its existing Romani settlements as of February 2006; two municipalities provided land for Romani settlements, while nine more completed partial improvements in existing Romani settlements.¹⁰⁴ Coordinators for the implementation of National Action Plans, including the

⁹⁷ "Gradnja za siromašne samo od projekta do projekta", *Danas*, 26 Dec 2005.

⁹⁸ Correspondence with Đorđe Mojović, SIRP / UN Habitat, 4 Apr 2006

⁹⁹ UN Habitat information on SIRP, available at: <http://www.unhabitat.org.yu>.

¹⁰⁰ Correspondence with Đorđe Mojović, SIRP / UN Habitat, 4 Apr 2006

¹⁰¹ European Commission. "Serbia and Montenegro: 2005 Progress Report." Brussels: European Commission, 2005, p. 22.

¹⁰² "U Baču počeo pilot projekat za integraciju izbeglica: otkup seoskih domaćinstava na kredit", *Danas*, 13 Sept 2003.

¹⁰³ Jelena Marković, Deputy Minister for Human and Minority Rights, as quoted in "Integracija Roma je ustavna obaveza", *Beta*, 1 Dec 2005.

¹⁰⁴ Powerpoint presentation of Zlata Vuksanović, UN HABITAT Belgrade Office, shown at the public presentation of National Action Plans in Novi Sad, 9 Feb 2006.



Box 7: Empowerment through participation: Improving Roma housing in Novi Sad

The Sunny Settlement on the outskirts of Novi Sad, the capital of Vojvodina, was formerly known as “Bangladesh” – a toponym that was pejoratively meant to describe the highly substandard living conditions in this Roma settlement, where over 50 families live without electricity, garbage disposal or public transportation. After conducting an initial research gathering basic data on the settlement, activists from the Ecumenical Humanitarian Organization (EHO), a local interchurch NGO, decided that action must be taken and invited the local Roma to take an active part in delineating their neighbourhood’s future. Informal elections were organized in the settlement, resulting in a democratically elected committee to represent the community.

In the next phase, since February 2004, EHO facilitated nine public meetings where the Roma representatives discussed their settlement’s prospects with representatives of local and state institutions and NGOs. The agenda of the meetings included inter alia the legalization of the settlement, providing a playground for the children, organizing public transportation, building infrastructure for electricity supply, water and sewage. As a result of these meetings, and with the support of Vojvodina authorities protecting national minorities, the city institutions dealing with urban infrastructure and zoning, and the Centre for Social Care, the settlement has officially changed its name in an emblematic and empowering move, and is on the way to be legalized. A number of other improvements in the settlement are under way: children from the settlement are increasingly enrolled in the local school, and adults attend professional courses at the Open University. Acting as a facilitator in the dialogue between the community and the authorities, EHO also supported this initiative by implementing parallel small-scale projects addressing the medical and educational needs of the settlement’s inhabitants.

The Sunny Settlement project presents a positive example that could probably be multiplied in many illegal Roma settlements in Serbia. Those embarking on such initiatives, however, need to arm themselves with patience in dealing with somewhat bureaucratic and inflexible institutions, be prepared for delays caused by power changes in local politics, and ready to lobby strongly with both individuals and institutions on the general benefits stemming from developing Roma settlements.

SOURCE: ECUMENICAL HUMANITARIAN ORGANIZATION (EHO)

housing NAP, were appointed in over thirty municipalities in Serbia.¹⁰⁵ The approval of the 2006 budget for the Republic of Serbia, including the funds for the implementation of the housing NAP within the budget of the Ministry of Capital Investments, will provide funds for the building of 1200 flats for Roma.¹⁰⁶ It is also hoped that the Draft Law on Social Housing, prepared by the Ministry of Capital Investments, will be adopted in the course of 2006. Evidently, the feasibility of the housing NAP and other national action plans will greatly depend on three external factors: the overall economic growth in Serbia, providing funding for the implementation of plans, but also the political will among the stakeholders and decision makers, and the awareness among the majority population about the importance of social inclusion for the overall well-being of the community.

¹⁰⁵ Oral presentation of Zlata Vuksanović, UN Habitat, at the “Workshop on the Access to Human Rights, Including Social and Economic Rights for Refugees, IDPs and Minority Groups in Serbia and Montenegro,” organized by UNHCR and the Council of Europe, Belgrade, 18 Oct 2005.

¹⁰⁶ Roma Housing News, Society for the Improvement of Local Roma Communities, 29 Dec 2005.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

In summary, the economic and social situation of vulnerable groups in Serbia is seriously more reprehensible than the situation of the majority society. According to the results of the UNDP vulnerability survey in Serbia, considerably large shares of Roma and refugees live in poverty. Many of them are unemployed, and their unemployment tends to have a long-term character; Romani women in particular are absent from the work force. Most Roma make very low incomes, mainly in informal circumstances, and very few of them receive pensions at a late age. Literacy rates among Roma and refugees/IDPs lag behind the domicile non-Roma averages, and the lowest literacy rates are present among elderly women. Roma in particular largely miss on formal education, where their financial hardship is the main obstacle, and they are almost absent from tertiary education. Health services are often out of reach due to the lack of personal documents, finances, information or trust in the institutions. Considerable shares of Romani children are not immunized against preventable diseases. The difficult housing situation of the vulnerable groups, with almost a half of Roma living in slums, and a third of refugees/IDPs living as tenants, contributes to their vulnerability. Many households have outstanding utilities bills, owed for extended periods of time. Those persons who are both Romani and refugees/IDPs are at increased risk. Still, despite the needs, the implementation of national and local action plans spurred by the Decade of Roma Inclusions is mainly yet to begin.

In the light of the situation as detailed in the report and outlined above, it would be necessary that policies aiming at addressing the situation of vulnerable groups take into account some specific circumstances. As there is a number of already existing documents that offer detailed recommendations on the situation of vulnerable groups in Serbia,¹⁰⁷ and various specific recommendations have already been given in the course of the report, what follows is a final highlight of some issues that deserve special attention.

In the field of employment:

- Vocational training is an important tool, particularly for Roma employability, and efforts in this field should be combined with the formal education system;
- The support for small business should include measures for eliminating obstacles for external financial support, and include the focus on business training and education as a measure to ensure greater success of start-up businesses;
- Job placement programmes, with possible subsidies for employers, should be widely launched.

In the field of education:

- Education programmes for Roma should continue to extend in both formal and informal areas, and though pre-school education is crucial adult education, especially of women, should not be neglected;
- The inclusion of Roma in education should not be limited to children, but should also involve whole families and communities for support;
- The programs offering stipends and scholarships for Romani children, that are for the moment largely missing, should be extended and diversified to local levels as well.

In the field of health care,

- An active health promotion policy, with a considerable outreach aspect to help Roma communities to familiarize themselves with the national health system and procedures, is widely necessary,
- Large outreach immunization campaigns should continue, with an emphasis on the written vaccination records,
- Efforts should be invested in eliminating prejudices existing both among health care professionals and the Roma community.

¹⁰⁷ For instance, see the recommendations in the ERRC, Global IDP Project, Group 484, ICRC and IDP Inter-Agency Working Group publications listed in the Bibliography section.



In the field of housing,

- Ensure that new housing policies and relocations should also contribute to the social inclusion of vulnerable groups,
- Improve the availability of social housing under favourable terms for vulnerable communities,
- Due to the actual severely substandard social and health-related living conditions of vulnerable group, short-term solutions are very urgently needed, until long-term solutions are identified.

With regards to policies related to any field of activity for vulnerable groups,

- Statistical information on vulnerable groups is needed, and in short terms local institutions and NGOs are invited to launch surveys, particularly including unregistered settlements, and including Romani surveyors,
- Registration and the provision of personal documents is crucial as it is a basic requirement for a number of civic entitlements,
- The members of vulnerable groups and their associations must be constantly included in relevant decision-making processes, with a stronger inclusion of Roma in state institutions and local authorities, involving measures such as equal opportunities employment, and promoting the education of Roma in relevant disciplines,
- Besides nation-wide platforms, local actions and plans should also be encouraged, as they can successfully adjust wider solutions to local circumstances,
- All policies should involve gender equality aspects and promote the empowerment of women and girls from vulnerable communities,
- There should be more direct cooperation between the state institutions and NGOs, where the state could benefit from good practices of NGOs,
- The state should ensure sufficient resources for the implementation of its commitments under the National Action Plans, and ensure careful monitoring whether the projects indeed yield the expected results;
- The state should protect the rights of vulnerable groups, adopt and implement anti-discrimination legislation, and swiftly condemn any violations of rights.
- Finally, close coordination of and interaction in implementing various parallel initiatives, such as the Roma Decade, the Millennium Development Goals and the Poverty Reduction Strategy would maximise the effect of all of these efforts for better development opportunities of vulnerable groups in Serbia.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

Table 6: List of localities in which the interviews were conducted

No.	Location	No. of sampling points	Household interviews achieved	No.	Location	No. of sampling points	Household interviews achieved
1.	Ada	2	3	39.	Mionica	2	4
2.	Aleksinac	2	13	40.	Niš	6	70
3.	Alibunar	2	8	41.	Nova Crnja	2	5
4.	Apatin	2	5	42.	Novi Bečej	2	10
5.	Arandjelovac	2	5	43.	Novi Kneževac	2	0
6.	Bač	2	4	44.	Novi Pazar	1	10
7.	Batočina	1	2	45.	Novi Sad (city)	3	47
8.	Bela Crkva	2	5	46.	Odžaci	2	8
9.	Bela Palanka	2	3	47.	Opovo	2	2
10.	Beočin	2	9	48.	Pančevo	2	18
11.	Beograd	29	294	49.	Pećinci	2	5
12.	Blace	1	5	50.	Pirot	2	18
13.	Bogatić	2	5	51.	Plandište	2	2
14.	Bojnik	2	7	52.	Požarevac	2	22
15.	Bor	2	11	53.	Prokuplje	3	25
16.	Bujanovac	4	31	54.	Rača	1	2
17.	Čačak	1	5	55.	Raška	1	5
18.	Čičevac	2	6	56.	Ražanj	2	2
19.	Čoka	2	0	57.	Šabac	2	16
20.	Doljevac	2	7	58.	Sečanj	2	5
21.	Gadžin Han	2	2	59.	Senta	2	3
22.	Gornji Milanovac	1	3	60.	Smederevo	4	37
23.	Jagodina	1	13	61.	Smeder. Palanka	1	5
24.	Kanjiža	2	0	62.	Srbobran	2	4
25.	Kikinda	2	10	63.	Stara Pazova	2	12
26.	Koceljeva	2	5	64.	Subotica	2	26
27.	Kovačica	2	7	65.	Surdulica	2	11
28.	Kovin	2	9	66.	Trstenik	1	3
29.	Kragujevac (city)	4	47	67.	Valjevo	2	15
30.	Kraljevo	4	40	68.	Velika Plana	1	4
31.	Kruševac	4	40	69.	Vladičin Han	2	7
32.	Kuršumlija	2	17	70.	Vranje	4	45
33.	Lajkovac	2	4	71.	Vršac	2	10
34.	Lapovo	1	2	72.	Zrenjanin	2	24
35.	Lebane	2	7	73.	Žabalj	2	7
36.	Leskovac	5	56	74.	Žitište	2	5
37.	Medveđa	1	2	75.	Žitorađa	2	7
38.	Merošina	2	4		Miscellaneous	-	4

Table 7: Number of households and persons interviewed

	Domicile non-Roma	Roma	Refugees/IDPs	Total
Households	399	399	403	1201
Persons	1270	1759	1553	4582
Men	622	914	792	2328
Women	648	845	761	2254



APPENDIX 2

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. For any additional information related to the questionnaire, please see the dedicated website <http://vulnerability.undp.sk>.

B. Universe under study

The primary universe under study consists of: (i) all the households in Roma settlements or areas of compact Roma population; (ii) displaced persons (IDPs/refugees); and (iii) domicile non-Roma communities living in close proximity to Roma and refugees/IDPs.

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. Refugees, IDPs, and domicile non-Roma sample living in close proximity to Roma

Similar approach was adopted to refugees and IDPs. Data from official sources (registering their status) was used for the sampling. The samples for IDPs/refugees were constructed using official registries provided by expert organizations.

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, refugees and internally 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 representativeness 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 the 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.

The survey was executed by Medium Gallup, a GALLUP affiliated agency in Serbia, 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 Radević) were particularly instrumental in the final design of the methodology and sampling models.



APPENDIX 3

List of participants in consultation meetings

A. CONSULTATION MEETING IN NOVI SAD

Organized with the Secretariat for Labour, Employment and Gender Equality of the Executive Council of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina

Date: 12 December 2005

Participants:

Maja Branković, Vojvodina Secretariat for Labour, Employment, and Gender Equality

Nina Bojić, Vojvodina Secretariat for Demography, Family and Social Care of Children

Anna Bu, Ecumenical Humanitarian Organization

Biljana Delić, Vojvodina Secretariat for Health Care and Social Policy

Stanka Dimitrov, Ecumenical Humanitarian Organization

Đorđe Jovanović, Romani magazine *Them*

Danijela Korać-Mandić, Novi Sad Humanitarian Centre

Romeo Mihajlović, Office for Roma Inclusion

Petar Novica Nikolić, Radio Television of Serbia / Roma Programme

Jelica Rajačić-Čapaković, Vojvodina Secretariat for Labour, Employment, and Gender Equality

Srđan Šajn, Council for Roma Integration of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina

Zorana Šijački, Vojvodina Secretariat for Labour, Employment, and Gender Equality

Radmila Zećirović, NGO *Khetane-Zajedno*

Spomenka Zelenović, Vojvodina Secretariat for Labour, Employment, and Gender Equality

Tatjana Perić, UNDP National Vulnerability Report for Serbia Team

Paola Pagliani, UNDP

Daniel Varga, UNDP

B. CONSULTATION MEETING IN KRAGUJEVAC

Organized with the Roma Information Centre

Date: 13 December 2005

Participants:

Nevenka Bogdanović, Serbian Red Cross
Slavoljub Đorđević, Fund for the Development of Roma Community
Goran Joksimović, School Management
Zoran Jovanović, NGO Sveti Georgije
Radoje Ranković, NGO Nada
Branka Ristić, Social Cooperative Vivere
Slavica Saveljić, City of Kragujevac
Aleksandar Spasić, Roma Information Centre
Olivera Tomić, Beta News Agency
Gordana Vladisavljević, NGO Nada
Representatives of the Centre for Social Work Kragujevac
Representatives of the NGO Nova nada
Representatives of the NGO Zavičaj
Rozalija Ilić, UNDP National Vulnerability Report for Serbia Team
Tatjana Perić, UNDP National Vulnerability Report for Serbia Team
Paola Pagliani, UNDP

C. CONSULTATION MEETING IN VRANJE

Organized with the UNDP Vranje Office

Date: 14 December 2005

Participants:

Zoran Antić, Municipality of Vranje
Altena Asanović, Office for the Protection and Realisation of Individual and Collective Rights of the Roma National Minority
Dejan Bajramović, Roma Office in the Municipality of Vranje
Vesna Cvetković, Médecins Sans Frontières Belgium, Vranje Office
Ašmet Eminović, Romani Association Rom, Prekodolce
Nedžip Eminović, NGO Unija Roma, Municipality of Leskovac
Danica Ivković, Centre for Social Work Leskovac
Miroslav Janković, Refugees Office of the Municipality of Leskovac
Vida Maksimović, Municipality of Leskovac
Mirjana Milenković, UNDP Vranje Office
Ivana Mladenović, UNDP Vranje Office
Naca Kadrijević, Roma Office in the Municipality of Vranje
Kenan Rašitović, NGO Ofer, Bujanovac
Dobrivoje Ristić, Romani Association Rom, Vladičin Han



Nebojša Silistarević, Roma Office in the Municipality of Vranje

Rahmana Silistarević, NGO ROK, Vranje

Ratko Silistarević, SO PJO

Biljana Stanković, UNDP Vranje Office

Dragan Stanković, UNDP Vranje Office

Tatjana Strahinjić-Nikolić, UNDP Vranje Office

Boris Zlatanov, UNDP Vranje Office

Rozalija Ilić, UNDP National Vulnerability Report for Serbia Team

Tatjana Perić, UNDP National Vulnerability Report for Serbia Team

Paola Pagliani, UNDP

D. CONSULTATION MEETING IN BELGRADE

Organized with the Secretariat for the Roma National Strategy of the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights

Date: 15 December 2005

Participants:

Vesna Acković, Ministry of Education and Sport of the Republic of Serbia

Anne-Maria Ćuković, Secretariat for the Roma National Strategy

Eduard Čalikjan, National Employment Agency

Ljuan Koka, Roma National Council

Vladimir Macura, Society for the Improvement of Roma Settlements

Đorđe Stojiljković, Ministry of Health of the Republic of Serbia

Rozalija Ilić, UNDP National Vulnerability Report for Serbia Team

Tatjana Perić, UNDP National Vulnerability Report for Serbia Team

Paola Pagliani, UNDP

E. INDIVIDUAL CONSULTATIONS

Osman Balić, Yurom Centre, Niš

Tara Bedard, European Roma Rights Centre, Budapest

Jasmina Bell, UNDP, Belgrade

Yassen Bossev, Gallup International, Sofia
Slađana Brakus, TNS Medium Gallup, Belgrade
Robert Bu, Ecumenical Humanitarian Organization, Novi Sad
Jelena Ćurčić, Y-PEER, Belgrade
Marija Demić, Minority Rights Centre, Niš
Dejan Dimitrov, Roma Students Association, Novi Sad
Ljubica Đokić, Radio Točak, Valjevo
Srđan Gavrilović, YuMSIC-IFMS, Novi Sad
Sandra Ilić, Novi Sad Humanitarian Centre, Novi Sad
Borka Jeremić, UNDP, Belgrade
Tanja Jovanović, Minority Rights Centre, Novi Sad
Vesna Jovanović, Danish Refugee Council, Belgrade
Jelena Jovanović, Vojvodina Secretariat for Regulation, Administration and National Minorities
Aleksandra Jović, Poverty Reduction Strategy Implementation Focal Point, Belgrade
Stevan Nikolić, Roma Cultural Centre, Subotica
Miodrag Počuč, Ecumenical Humanitarian Organization, Novi Sad
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Đurđica Zorić, Bibija, Belgrade



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