



DECADE OF
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BASIC INFORMATION ON THE SITUATION OF THE ROMA MINORITY

Please provide any updated data, including where possible disaggregated data (by age, sex, etc.), and collected in 2014, concerning:

- *Estimated total number and proportion of the Roma population in the country*
- *Number of Roma living under the poverty line and the proportion to the overall population living under the poverty line.*

Roma are a specific ethnic group that live in the territory of Albania since XIV century. During the centuries they have managed to preserve their language, tradition and culture. Historically the relations between the Albanians and Roma have been cold ones, but in difference from many other European countries, there have been no conflicts or racial persecutions among them. During the post-socialist transition period – due to the collapse and closure of public enterprises, their specific professional character, low level of education, they passed from having a relative level of wellbeing to an extreme poverty. Actually they are the most poor and marginalized ethnic group in Albania.

According to Census 2011, Albania is primarily a country of ethnic homogeneity; 83% are Albanian plead and 14% did not respond, while the persons who have declared themselves as ethnic minorities make up less than 2% of the population. Among these minorities, the Roma population numbering 8301 people and the Egyptian people is 3368 – less than 0.5% of the total of 2.8 million inhabitants of the country. Referring men and women, report of 2014 gender distribution in 1st January 2013 results in 50.3% males and 49.7% females for the entire population, but does not give statistics on the gender distribution Roma and Egyptian population.

Demographic profiles of the two communities are in marked contrast to the Albanian population. The age structure reflects the high fertility and high mortality rate for these two age groups: the average age is 26 years for Roma and 29 years for Egyptians to 35.5 years for Albanian people. The Roma population is younger than other groups where 34% of the population under the age younger than 15 years versus 27% of Egyptians and 20% of Albanians. Roma live mostly in urban areas 76.5% compared with 53.5% of the total population. Regarding the formation of the families tow phenomena like early marriage and early parenting are commonplace these two communities. At age 20 years, 60% of Roma women are married (twice more than Albanian women) and 43% of girls aged 18 have given birth to a child. Very early motherhood (between ages 13-17) affects 34% of Roma teenagers, 13% of Egyptian adolescents and 2.5% of those down Albanian.

Based on the 2012 Living Standards Measurement Survey (LSMS), 14.3% of Albanians lived below the poverty line of approximately 50 USD (4.900 Albanian Lek) per capita per month. There are no specific data indicating the percentage of Roma population living in absolute poverty or extreme anyhow the studies have showed that their poverty level is almost twice higher than the Albanians. This created a vicious circle that reproduces illiteracy and low



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education level between the Roma which deepens even more their marginalization in the society.

The incomes of Roma families usually come from employment in low-skilled jobs, often in the non-formal sector. The empirical data show that the main drivers even of the internal migration process are unemployment, low income and poverty. According to the UNICEF study, almost half of the surveyed Roma are unemployed and this unemployment is long term. They usually work in the informal sector, where the trade of used clothes, casual jobs, music, collection of cans and begging are the main sources of their incomes. In the last years the income sources of many Roma families from trading used clothes have been reduced or exhausted due to the demand decrease and competition increase. As a consequence there is a shift of informal work sources from the trade of used clothes to the collection of scrap metal and cans currently 42 percent of the Roma work on their collection. The reduction of incomes entails the increase of poverty level for specific groups and strata. Almost 78% of Roma families are categorized in the “very poor” group. Meanwhile the increasing number of Roma involved in collecting scrap metal and cans increases competition, and in the conditions of limited sources, it reduces the income of Roma families. In these conditions many Roma choose to migrate to other cities where the competition is lower.

Actually, the internal migration is a coping mechanism, perhaps the most important in facing poverty. On one hand migration helps the Roma to survive for a short term period but on the other hand, it has negative consequences for Roma families and especially for their children. It affects the children’s education, health and economic security. Under these conditions their employment opportunities will continue to be limited to unqualified jobs, with high uncertainty and low income.

INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT AND FUNDING FOR ROMA INCLUSION

- *Please describe (if any) changes in 2014 in the participation of Roma in decision-making processes/arrangements and public administration structures.*
- *Please describe how and to what extent you have been cooperating with Roma civil society organizations, including the Decade Focal Point in your country, regarding the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of your Decade Action Plan or National Roma Integration Strategy.*
- *Please describe briefly the process of monitoring and evaluation of policies targeted towards Roma. How do you measure the impact of these policies (through field visits, surveys, independent evaluations etc.)?*
- *What is the total amount and percentage of the 2014 national budget dedicated to the implementation of the Decade Action Plan or National Roma Integration Strategy in your country?*



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- *What kinds of funding sources (local, national and international) are considered for the implementation of the Decade National Action Plan/National Roma Integration Strategy in 2015?*

Based on the Opinion of the European Commission for Albania, one of the key priorities is that Albania takes concrete steps to reinforce the protection of human rights, notably for women, children and persons belonging to minorities, and to effectively implement anti-discrimination policies. Furthermore, the aim is to prevent social exclusion and to develop social inclusion policies/measures for the most vulnerable, notably the Roma population, inter alia, and other minorities.

The progress report 2013 for Albania stated that there has been uneven progress in the area of social inclusion and there has been some progress in poverty reduction, however pockets of persistent poverty remain in some areas. Little progress has been made in the concrete implementation of the Strategy for the improvement of the living conditions of the Roma minority and the action plan of “Decade of Roma Inclusion”.

Roma issues is one of the priorities for the new government and the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth, as part of its mission coordinates crosscutting policies for the Roma community and monitors programs at national level in areas including education, health, housing and employment. Likewise, addressing the situation of the Roma community in Albania, remains the task of relevant ministries and local government, considering that the issue of integration of this community is quite complex and requires joint and well coordinated interventions.

MSWY will continue or follow a right based approach in designing and implementing strategies, programs and plans for Roma and Egyptian communities. Albania has ratified and signed a number of International conventions on human rights and other key important instruments and documents. It is crucial that all these instruments are properly and intentionally translated into local realities and into actions driven by a rights based and inclusive approach.

The Strategy on Roma Decade and the new draft Social Inclusion Policy Document 2016-2020 will serve as a basis in developing a new Plan of Action for Roma and Egyptian communities (2016-2020).

The new National Employment and Skills Strategy 2014 – 2020 priority is to promote social inclusion and territorial cohesion. The strategy notes the training and employment of women and men in marginalized and disadvantaged, including Roma and persons with disabilities.

In this context, MSWY in cooperation with European Commission organized a seminar on “Inclusion of Roma and Egyptian communities – New challenges in social development of Albania” on 20-21st February 2014. During the following weeks, were drafted the recommendations from this workshop in consultation with all stakeholders contributing for Roma issues. Recommendations will be delineated in a concrete action plan with measures, activities, budgets and defined responsibilities.



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The plan will outline actions that need to be undertaken by the state institutions in order to provide better services to R/E populations relying on the principles of a) availability, b) access ability and c) affordability.

Alongside MSWY's continuous efforts to mainstream Roma and Egyptian issues into the policy and legislation framework, special attention will be given to these communities through targeted action that are of limited duration and especially at the local and national level to overcome discrimination and achieve integration.

MSWY will continue to promote direct participation of Roma and Egyptian communities and civil society in the process of strategy development, implementation, and evaluation, and development of long-term partnerships. MSWY will continue to promote rights, civility, equity and respect.

A new generation of young well-educated Roma and Egyptian activists is emerging. MSWY will continue to promote and develop approaches to focus on the youth groups, to ensure their participation in policy dialogue.

Extensive attention will be focused on dissemination of information and on building a stronger awareness on gender equality, the risks of early marriage, the benefits of longer years of education and professional training as well as protection mechanisms against domestic and gender-based violence. Following are some recommendations that will be delineated in a concrete action plan.

General Recommendations

- 1- Public Policies Strengthening
- 2- Empowering National Structures
- 3- Empower Regional and Local Capacities on social inclusion and social intervention plans for Roma and Egyptian
- 4- Clear Monitoring and Evaluation Framework/Strengthened statistics and Research
- 5- Budgeting/Funding

Specific Recommendations

- 1- Civic Registration
- 2- Social Protection
- 3- Education
- 4- Employment and VET
- 5- Social Housing
- 6- Health
- 7- Culture

Until now concerning the abovementioned areas have been accomplished some interventions Roma communities have benefited mostly by United Nations funded and implemented



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projects. Worth to be mentioned is the ongoing of EU-funded project “Supporting Social Inclusion of Roma and Egyptian Communities”. The direct beneficiaries of the project are Roma and Egyptian communities living in the regions of Korca, Vlora and Berat. The project is being implemented by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Country Office in Albania in partnership with the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth (MoSWY). The project duration is July 2012 – December 2014 with a total Budget of 1.695.000 Euro by which 45000 Euro is the contribution of Albanian Government.

Swiss Cooperation Office in Albania is also active in promoting Roma inclusion and empowerment. With a new commitment of Euro 1.5 million, Switzerland is implementing, during the last three years the “Alternated Education and Vocational Training (Cefa)” project, that will contribute to further enhancement of the social inclusion of Roma minority through education, empowering the community and promoting the Roma minority rights.

Together with the above actions, the implementation of the IPA 2014 project (for which we are currently working), will provide a significant contribution to the improvement of the living conditions of vulnerable groups in some cities.

Overall objective:

To ensure that the rights of disadvantaged individuals and groups are equally ensured through legislation, inclusive policies, employment and special interventions.

Specific objective:

To address the conditions of poverty reproduction and build systematic practices for sustainable integration of R/E community.

Increase availability, accessibility and affordability of public and social services for disadvantaged R/E communities having regard to relevant profiling, systemic statistics, and innovative and/or effective regional practices.

Results:

- 1- Improved participatory local planning process in two municipalities and priority development interventions implemented.
- 2- Enhanced participation of disadvantaged and long-term unemployed R/E in all six government job-promotion programs.
- 3- Developed and implemented integrated approaches for Social Protection program with other programs such as Employment and VET/Social Housing etc.
- 4- Increased access of R/E people in education ensured through implementation of inclusive education policies and piloting of innovative approaches.
- 5- Continued capacity building for R/E civil society is ensured capacity of civil society organizations to participate in national and local policy making and monitoring increased.

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1. EDUCATION

- *Please list any mainstream and targeted policy measures that were designed and implemented at national or local level to support Roma education in 2014 with a special focus on the goals and implementation of the Decade National Action Plan/National Roma Integration Strategy (if applicable). Please include measures such as: improving early childhood education and care, reducing early school leaving, encouraging Roma participation in secondary and tertiary education, desegregation measures, inclusive education, teacher training etc.*
- *Please describe to the extent possible the impact of the measures your government implemented in 2014 (including quantitative and descriptive data). For the purpose of peer to peer learning, kindly consider to include also measures with negative impact on Roma inclusion and explain the process to minimize such negative impact.*

Regarding education, policies of the Ministry of Education and Sports have focused on the provision of comprehensive education, without discrimination against anyone on the benefit of quality educational services for students especially Roma and Egyptian communities. Ministry of Education and Sports, on the implementation of its policies and objectives for improving the educational situation of this community, has undertaken legislative administrative and institutional reforms in the areas that ensure the inclusion of Roma children and youth.

To provide opportunities and define responsibilities for the academic year 2013-2014 the instructions of the Minister of Education and Sports were also drafted:

- a. No. 29, dated 08.02.2013, "On the procedures of attendance of basic education with part-time.
- b. No. 31, dated 08.02.2013, "On the procedures of attendance of basic education for students who have not attended at least two classes of basic education.
- c. Order no. 344, dated 19.08.2013 "Establishing unit for psycho-social service"

Regarding the terms of raising the level of education of Roma children is progress and it is reflected in the available data from the Ministry of Education and Sports where there is an increase in the number of integrated children in the education system. Positive is the fact that the policies of the Ministry of Education and Sports are also targeted to parents and family members working in particular with them to increase their awareness on the importance of children's education. There are positive efforts for the establishment of multidisciplinary groups in some quarters for the treatment of problems of the Roma population, but these are on an unaccompanied volunteerism and respective budgets.

Based on the census, "Mapping Roma Children in Albania" carried out by the "Center for Economic and Social Studies" in 2011 under the joint project has MSWY and UNICEF, it



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appears that 87% of Roma children attend compulsory school age increasing basic education in this context priority inclusion of Roma girls in basic education.

Whereas the most recent statistical information regarding the graduation of Roma women: 35 Roma people have graduated from the Teacher where 20 are women and which are employed as teachers in preschool, basic education or high school.

Currently 87% of Roma children are educated in basic education with the ultimate objective of education for all Roma children. The number of Roma, children who are part of the university education system for 2013-2014 is 4219 total, while in 2012-2013 this number was 4095.

Registration of Roma children in the first school grade continues, even though they are not provided with a birth certificate during the first month of the school year.

Roma children in compulsory education receive free textbooks in school were they are enrolled.

For identifying and attracting the marginalized children and to increase confidence at the school and minimize school drop out in the summer holidays in 2013, eleven (11) Regional Education Directorates and seven (7) Education Offices, in collaboration with UNICEF and other associations were opened and operated 60 summer camps, where from a total of 2.667 children, in which 722 were Roma and Egyptians.

In establishing friendly schools for every student, through cross-institutional cooperation integrated approach was piloted with “food in school“ in the school Naim Frashëri” in Korça, in school year 2012-2013 was supported with 335 grants\food quota for Roma and Egyptian students by DCM no. 665, dated 08.07.2013, this has continued for the academic years 2013-2014 and 2014-2015.

RED\Eos, in schools and classes attended by Roma children, have appointed experienced teachers, dedicated to work and maintaining communication ethics. From 939 teachers working with Roma students, 198 of them are highly educated and 141 middle-level educated in teaching with over 20 years of work. In schools of the Roma and Egyptian community are operating 63 boards where are represented 98 Roma and Egyptian parents.

For attendance and progress of students in the learning process, are set up and function support groups near schools with the participation of the teacher, psychologist, school board, student government and members of the Roma community.

Pursuant to the recommendations of the “Seminar on awareness for the inclusion of Roma and Egyptian communities, with Albania’s EU integration”. MES has developed an action plan with the guidance of the Minister of Education and Sports, for school year 2013-2014, in Secondary Education, charging with the responsibility of all RED\EO for the timely implementation of activities outlined in this plan, which is scheduled with the respective budget. In this framework, the focus is not only on the continuity of the activities carried out so far, but also starting new initiatives for the future the experience, therefore:



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In the agreement made between associations and school directorates, approved by RED/EO and MES, nearby schools is organized differentiated labor and supplementary lessons with students with delays and difficulties in learning.

In implementing the "National Plan for 2009-2013 zero abandonment", MES has prioritized the education of pupils attending the compulsory education age strata favored than the population with special emphasis on inclusion in education of Roma children, children with disabilities Egyptian and generally limited to girls' education support these layers Taking concrete measures following term to respond better and the quality of their education:

a. Initiatives for identifying and registering children in school invisible / semi-invisible and at risk of dropping out, which consist mainly of Roma, Egyptians and others from marginalized families in economic and social difficulty, with the support of UNICEF and Observatory Rights of the Child).

b. Promote alternative forms of support Roma children in special need, (the initiative "Every Roma Child garden" with the support of UNICEF), as well as their families, their educational purpose.

c. Coordination of cross-sectorial cooperation between the Child Protection Unit and civil society institutions to solve problems leavers.

d. In favor of a social education and support activities undertaken for the return of psycho-social services in schools in a real and functional service, the establishment and functioning of the service unit psychosocial RED / EO, targeting expansion in all DAR / EAs, and training of psychologists in RED / EO partner institutions.

g. National Inspectorate of Education University (now the State Inspectorate of Education) for improving the educational situation of the Roma and Egyptian communities has contributed to the field of publishing and teaching. So, we mention the booklet "A School for All" (brochure for the inclusion of Roma children and other difficulties in education) and package the instruments for physical dropout prevention school, under the project "zero abandonment", with focus on creating successful schools with marginalized community.

j. Action Plan for Integration of Roma and Egyptians include a review of the program "Second Chance", in order to facilitate the transfer of his students in regular classes and to find other means to prevent isolation. In higher education there is a quota increase Roma and Egyptian students. According Below molded quotas by MES are 20 quotas in the Bachelor level and 20 vocational schools and 20 Master's level (all with scholarships). Most Roma students are attending programs of medicine, economics, and teaching. In addition to curriculum reform and changes in behavior are important for promoting social inclusion. Schools are working to promote Roma culture through events and to engage Roma and Egyptian parents as school board representatives.

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k. The Action Plan also provides teacher training and the creation of auxiliary positions in primary and preschool which will be occupied by Roma and Egyptians, with the aim to support the integration of students.

During the 2014-2015 academic year 4437 Roma pupils are enrolled and following the obligatory education and 408 secondary education 3370 Roma pupils benefited free textbooks during the 2013-2014 academic year, while 3219 benefited during the 2014-2015 academic year.

From implementation of a pilot project, 315 Roma and Egyptian pupils of “Naim Frashëri” primary school in Korça, benefit daily scholarship of 76 ALL during a period of 170 days of lessons. MES and MSWY in partnership with ARSIS with the support of Roma Education Fund started implementation of a pilot project named “Improving education achievements of Roma and Egyptian youth in the ninth grade and their support until completing secondary education”. In the framework of this project 80 Roma and Egyptian pupils are attending grade nine benefited social scholarships (30 EUR/monthly for every selected pupil, in total 300 EUR/year).

2. EMPLOYMENT

- *Please list any mainstream and targeted policy measures that were designed and implemented to support Roma employment in 2014 with a special focus on the goals and implementation of the Decade National Action Plan or the National Roma Integration Strategy (if applicable). Please include measures such as: tailored job search assistance, first work experience programs, targeted activation measures, measures supporting self-employment and entrepreneurship, measures promoting employment of qualified Roma civil servants, eliminating barriers, including discrimination, to entering the labor market, etc.*
- *Please describe to the extent possible the impact of measures your government implemented in 2014 (including quantitative and descriptive data). For the purpose of peer to peer learning, kindly consider to include also measures with negative impact on Roma inclusion and explain the process to minimize such negative impact.*

Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth has taken concrete initiatives for policy incentives and facilities for Roma, with the aim of promoting their employment and training, formation and their integration into the labor market.

This policy has always been a priority in the implementation of the objectives of the National Strategy “For the improvement of the living conditions of the Roma minority”.

Employment and professional education

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Drafting of the National Strategy for employment and skills 2014-2020

Strategy aims to promote quality jobs and opportunities for all skill Albanian men and women throughout the life cycle. Action Plan targeted measures for directing the development of the education system, vocational training and employment. Special attention is devoted to taking concrete measures for the inclusion of specific groups such as people with disabilities, Roma women, young people, measures that respond to the low level of employment of these categories. This will be achieved through active policies coherent and coordinated, at the same time addressed the supply and demand gap for employment and social inclusion.

Roma women and girls have been part of the employment policies of vocational training undertaken by MMSR. There is growing awareness of this part of the population and increase access to information about registration in the Employment or to be part of these policies, but again it is necessary dissemination of information on a wider scale at the national level.

As regards the labor market: Less than a quarter of each group is employed and gender inequality: 15% of Roma women and 13% of Egyptian women are employed. Half of Roma able to work and two-thirds of Egyptians seeking work, compared with 29% of Albanians. The unemployment rate among Roma women is 58% and Egyptian women are 73%. Roma employees, the quality of work that they perform reflects the fact that most of them do not participate in comprehensive economy but find work in the informal sector.

They have been implemented over the years some employment promotion programs of which mainly targeting Roma / Egyptian.

1-supported program: DCM. 48, dated 16.01.2008, "employment promotion program of unemployed in difficulty". Unemployed in difficulty are: long-term unemployed; persons receiving social assistance; persons who receive unemployment benefits; persons entering for the first time in the labor market, aged 18-25 years; persons over 45 years old, who do not have a higher education than secondary education or its equivalent; persons with disabilities; people from the Roma community; returnees, with economic problems. Employed for 12 months, this program provides and supports full employment of this category. (Temporary special measure)

2- Programs based on: DCM. 27, dated 11.01.2012, "On Employment Promotion Programme of the women from special groups". Beneficiaries of this program are female job seekers from specific groups: women unemployed for a long period (of registered unemployed for more than one year); Women who benefit from the program's income support; trafficked women; Women over 50 years; Roma women; women with disabilities; young mothers; divorced women with social problems; women who return from abroad, with economic problems. Under this program, the respective employment office funds:

a. Employer with a monthly financing in the amount of up to 100 percent of contributions to the mandatory social insurance and health (part of the employer's contribution), provided that the duration of the employment contract of not less than one year.



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b. employee included under this program up to four salaries 100 percent of the national minimum wage, in the fifth month of the sixth and eleventh month of the twelfth contract, while other months employer funds.

Unemployed from Roma and Egyptian, nationally, are registered in the employment offices 9,690 people, of whom 4,875 are women (or 50% of total).

Government supports capacity building for vocational training, in quantity and quality, through the development of the education and vocational training public. Within the reforms undertaken by the current government vocational education system exceeds the area of responsibility of the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth by formed a unique system of education and vocational training.

This approach to vocational education system is aimed to contribute to the development of quality vocational training of the workforce, focusing especially on youth, women and vulnerable groups.

In Nr. 286 Order dated 16.12.2013 “On tariffs of public vocational training system” provided that the registration fees for unemployed job seekers registered in labor offices and want to pursue professions and vocational training, provided from Regional Directorates of Public Vocational Training are free.

Pursuant to Law no. 8872, dated 29.03.2002 “On education and training in the Republic of Albania”, as amended, DCM no. 616, dated 12.04.2002 “On the determination of the specific categories that benefit from the Law no.8872, dated 29.03.2002 “On education and training in the Republic of Albania”, the Minister Instruction no. 2222, dated 31.10.2002 “On Advice and vocational orientation” (item 6), guides be given special attention to vocational training of persons from specific groups.

Among beneficiary groups are the girls and women from the Roma community.

The analysis of statistical indicators of 2014 for activities of the Regional Vocational Training results:

- For the period January-December 2014 have registered to train 17,138 people, completed courses 13,893 people, of whom 13 102 people have been certified. Compared to 2013 there was an increase of 4,208 persons certified.
- Women are trained a total of 6,296 (45% of all trainees) compared to 2013 are 2,400 more.
- Trained by separate groups: 175 trafficked Roma people, where 27 people were women / girls, 250 disabled persons and returnees 170 people.

Drafting legal basis to encourage and facilitate professional training for Roma.

During 2014 overall, 9690 Roma and Egyptian individuals (4875 women) registered as unemployed job-seekers at their respective Employment Offices and received services offered by these offices such as job mediation, counseling and orientation for jobs and professions.



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The ten (10) new Employment Offices have become operational in the most important districts (and the new model of service delivery is being applied even at the old ones). The new offices offer employment services of three levels at the standards of European homologue offices as following information, employment service, and individual counseling mainly for vulnerable groups. Service delivery employers are trained and continue to be qualified on implementation of the new model of services.

Form the Employment Promotion Programme, 146 Roma and Egyptian unemployed job-seekers have been employed.

In the public vocational training centers, 175 Roma and Egyptian unemployed job-seekers benefited free vocational training in different professional curses required in the labor market, such as cooking, sewing hydraulics, repairmen and maintenance of vehicles etc. All candidates got certified on these professions.

As regarding the promotion of the values and culture of Roma, on the occasion of the International Roma Day (8 April), socio-cultural activities were organized in the premises of the National Museum during the week from 5 to 9 April.

The program included among others an exhibition of works of a visual Roma artist, who exhibited his works inspired by Roma motives and each of the works was accompanied by explanations about the message that was intended screening of documentaries about art and Roma culture and a concert with about 11 Roma musicians who performed Roma music under the slogan “equal in diversity”.

3. HOUSING

- *Please list any mainstream or targeted policy measures that were designed and implemented to support housing for Roma (or housing of marginalized people, including Roma) in 2014 with a special focus on the goals and implementation of the Decade National Action Plan and the National Roma Integration Strategy (if applicable). Please include measures such as: eliminating spatial segregation and promoting desegregation, promoting non-discriminatory access to social housing, etc.*
- *Please describe to the extent possible the impact of measures your government implemented in 2014 (including quantitative and descriptive data). For the purpose of peer to peer learning, kindly consider to include also measures with negative impact on Roma inclusion and explain the process to minimize such negative impact.*

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Improvement of the living standards of Roma and Egyptian communities is one of the issues in the focus of the Ministry of Urban Development and Tourism and a priority to solve social problems and improve housing conditions for this community.

The efforts to mitigate social problems of the Roma community are coordinated through the Strategy “For the improvement of living conditions of the Roma and Egyptian communities”. Action Plan of the strategy and recommendations of the Council of Europe. On this basis, the approved amendments to the law no.9232, dated 13.05.2004 “On social programs of housing for residents of urban areas” (Primary law on housing) specify the conditions and criteria to treat through social housing programs, residents who are in need and have no opportunity to obtain housing through the mechanisms of the open market. The law has undergone some changes, the last in 2012 (Law no.54, dated 10.05.2012 “On some additions and amendments to Law no. 9232, dated 30.05.2004 “On social housing programs” (Amendment).

The law has been amended beside other issued, extending the field of application not only in urban but also rural areas. This also serves the Roma families that previously could not be addressed by this law, due to their location in different municipalities of the country.

Beneficiaries ‘selection criteria have changed and are evaluated based on:

- Housing conditions
- Family conditions
- Social conditions
- Economic Status

The law determines that based on these criteria Municipal Councils approve the scoring system for beneficiaries.

Roma community is a beneficiary of all social housing programs, such as:

Program of rental for social housing which is implemented in 8 municipalities;

Program of low-cost housing including:

- Soft Lending
- Homes purchased in the open market in cities where the cost of housing is lower.

The law also creates opportunities for Roma families to benefit from specific programs targeting the families based on their income. These programs are:

- Bonus for housing with Municipal Council approval and covers no more than 50% of the minimum rent of the dwelling on the open market.
- Subsidized rent for rented social housing in the ownership of the municipality. Subsidy to the rent is applied in those cases where the rent of the residence occupies more than 25% of net family income. Subsidy measures are adopted by municipal councils. (Clarification – if the family receives welfare benefits, rent will be subsidized 100%).



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- Loan interest subsidy to families which affords the soft loan conditions, 0% interest is paid by the renting families in the former properties of expropriated subjects and 3% interest is paid by the beneficiary families through application to the municipality.

Of all these programs and aid beneficiaries and Roma families have priority in selection.

In addition to the above, is legally adopted a specific program that addresses only the Roma community, the program “Small Grants”, which addresses the problems of improving housing conditions for this community. (Improvement of housing, equipment with sanitary facilities, improvement of infrastructure, etc..)

The Ministry of Urban Development, in the framework of implementation of the Strategy for Improving Living Conditions of Roma, the EC Recommendations (Priority 5, the Road-Map) and the Law 9232, dated 13.05.2004, “For social housing programs” by Minister’s Order No. 3 dated 19.03.2014, drafted terms of references for projects to improve living conditions of Roma and Egyptian communities, which were issued to all LGUs, calling them to design projects aimed at improving the living conditions of Roma and Egyptian communities.

The 2014 State Budget program allocated a fund of 30 million for this purpose.

Lushnja Municipality was among the first local government unit that drafted and submitted to MUD the project titled “Emergency intervention in the Roma neighborhood, Saver, Lushnja”. The implementation of this project during 2014 enabled that 22 houses were reconstructed in Saver neighborhood, Lushnja. The works consisted in the construction of new roofs, doors, windows; sewage system serving to 75 families was another element of this project. The works completed in December 2014.

Also the 2014 budget allocated funds for projects on improving the housing conditions of Roma and Egyptian in 42,000,000 ALL value. Funds for these projects were distributed specifically to:

1. Otlak commune which implemented the project in two steps:

First step titled “Reconstruction of Roma communities houses, intervention in infrastructure and sewage system in Morava, Otlak Commune”, costing 15,000,000 ALL. During this phase there are reconstructed 19 Roma houses. Works consisted on construction of new roofs, doors and windows furnishing and connection of hydro-sanitary and electric connections within houses. 50 Roma families benefited from the sewage system intervention. The project completed in December 2014.

Second step titled: “Reconstruction of Roma communities houses, intervention in infrastructure and sewage system in Morava village”. MUD in this phase financed the construction of the main collector where the sewage system water is streamed. Also in this stage 5 other Roma community houses got reconstructed. And 50 other Roma families benefited from the construction of the main collector. The project preventive value was 11,



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500, 000 ALL. The project completed in December 2014. In total 120 Roma families benefited directly and indirectly by the two phases of intervention in Otlak commune.

2. Lezha municipality prepared the project “Reconstruction of 32 Roma and Egyptian houses in Skanderbeg neighborhood”. The estimated value of the project was 11,500,000 ALL and 32 houses got reconstructed in the framework of this project. Works consisted of construction of new roofs, windows and doors, connection of hydro-sanitary and electric connections within houses. The project completed in December 2014.

3. Përmet municipality prepared the project “Emergency intervention in the houses of Egyptian community in Përmet”. The estimated value of the project was 48,000,000 ALL. The project aimed to reconstruct 8 houses owned by Egyptians. Works consisted of constructions of new roofs, windows and doors, connection of hydro-sanitary and electric connections within houses. The project completed in December 2014.

Overall in 2014, around 258 Roma and Egyptian families benefited improved housing and living conditions by this project and they got involved during the constructions by improving somehow their income and quality of live.

5. HEALTH

- *Please list any mainstream and targeted policy measures that were designed and implemented to support the improvement of health care services for the Roma population in 2014 with a special focus on the goals and implementation of the Decade National Action Plan/National Roma Integration Strategy (if applicable). Please include measures such as: ensuring equal access to quality healthcare, ensuring basic social security coverage and comprehensive health services to Roma, preventive measures such as medical check-ups, prenatal and postnatal care and family planning, targeted health awareness campaigns, etc.*
- *Please describe to the extent possible the impact of measures your government implemented in 2014 (including quantitative and descriptive data). For the purpose of peer to peer learning, kindly consider to include also measures with negative impact on Roma inclusion and explain the process to minimize such negative impact.*

Ministry of Health (Public Health Institute/ Departments of Promotion) organizes periodically, throughout the country promotional activities for child care, nutrition, family planning, STD and early pregnancy prevention, focusing especially on Roma women/girls.



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The Ministry of Health in cooperation with Vodafone Albania Foundation, in 2014 enabled that Roma community was involved in the project on early basic health control through the use of telemedicine medical techniques. For his reason was used the national location map of the Roma community and of health centers close to their settlements.

Also, the Ministry of Health supported the project developed by Save the Children during the period of August 2013 – July 2014 “9+3 Healthy Maternity”. Roma women from Shkoza and Kinostudio areas were involved and 86 women benefited from the weekly information sessions regarding access to health services. Also 61 pregnant women were identified and benefited pregnancy care services and 25 newly married women (future mother) benefited from the project, while 12 women were supported to obtain health cards.

Vaccination is offered free of charge for all the population, including Roma and Egyptian children. Nurses that make vaccines go door to door to identify children and to provide them with vaccines. The migration of Roma and Egyptian families and lack of education makes them more vulnerable. Thus every year the Institute of Public Health (IPH) makes screening of areas where Roma and Egyptian families live to identify unvaccinated children. During 2014 IPH undertook an initiative to cover more than 95% of all Roma and Egyptians. Often, nurses that make vaccines, cooperate with social workers or mediators to improve communication with the community and to vaccinate more Roma and Egyptian children.

In addition IPH has piloted immunization information system in Shkodra and now is working in Lezha and Malësia e Madhe, include unvaccinated children. All Roma and Egyptian children are vaccinated free even when they are not registered, while IPH identifies them in the field.

Educational and promotional activities were implemented in health centers in different districts where Roma and Egyptian community lives. The programs are primarily focused on the most important health issues such as reproductive health, maternal and child health, appropriate measures needed for protection from HIV/AIDS, personal and environmental hygiene awareness programs etc.

6. ANTI-DISCRIMINATION AND GENDER EQUALITY

- *Please list any measures that were designed to support the fight against Roma discrimination and racism. Please describe to the extent possible the impact of these measures (including quantitative and descriptive data).*
- *Please list any measures that were designed to support gender equality between Roma women and men. Please describe to the extent possible the impact of these measures (including quantitative and descriptive data).*



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Protection of minorities is guaranteed by the Constitution of the Republic of Albania and the laws that provide the respect for their rights, which regulate specific areas of life, also clearly reveal the importance of the Albanian state has given the last years at racial discrimination. In framework of the five priorities of the European Commission to Albania, improvement of legislation and policies on minorities is one of the measures that our country has projected to receive, in accordance with the recommendations of the Advisory Committee of the Framework Convention for the Protection of Minority Rights Council of Europe.

The institutional framework for the protection of the rights of Roma and Egyptians in Albania is wide. Recognition of these institutions is important to the realization of the protection of their rights. Each institution has its own responsibility, but the cooperation and coordination between them is essential to providing the best possible results in the commitments undertaken. E.g.: For the implementation of strategic documents that have been approved in the country, is required cooperation and coordination of actions between central and local government.

The Commissioner for Protection from Discrimination has had and continues having regard to the improvement of standards, due to protection and respect of the rights of Roma and Egyptians. The Commissioner also realized during 2013 open days, which enable meetings with community members. Roma and Egyptians problems occur in areas of life such as housing, education, employment, goods and services. Also, Roma children have been subject of complaints or ex-officio cases of discrimination and in these cases the commissioner has proactive approach.

Services in the Transitory Emergency Center

In the framework of protection, promotion and integration of the Roma community, the Ministry of Social Welfare and Youth, after gaining formal administration of former military unit located in the Shish-Tufina by the Ministry of Defense, and arranged Roma families there, committed to the establishment and functioning of the Transitory Emergency Centre and to transform it into a well-completed social center, aiming to provide temporary housing to homeless families with difficulties to ensure their basic living conditions.

Currently, in the Transitory Emergency Centre 53 families (103 children and 103 adults, parents) are provided with direct support for meeting basic needs and psychosocial services. State Social Service with the support of Terre des Hommes organization has modeled the psychosocial services, awareness raising activities, education, creative and informative activities supporting children and families to rehabilitation, welfare and their reintegration into society. The focus of activities for 2014 was on:

- The protection of children and strengthening families through establishment of children protection service, case management through a multidisciplinary approach; 18 identified cases of children in street situations used for work and begging prevented and 42 children enrolled in public schools and 23 attended Romani Baxt kindergarten and will be integrated later in public kindergartens. Adults are supported to register as unemployment jobseekers and are supported for preparation of documentation to apply for economic aid,



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and informed and facilitated to be equipped with health card and access health services. Some families received food packages for the period based on an individual plan of intervention. Some families are supported and advised on undertaking activities for income generation (commerce) and are provided with equipment.

- Parenting groups on child growth and development.
- Activities for children after school time.
- Thematic awareness raising and psychosocial activities with children, families and community members.
- Promotion and encouragement of Volunteering.

As regarding the problem of **human trafficking**, some amendments to the Criminal Code came to pass to address this phenomenon and some other legal changes which ensure victims of trafficking are now being offered financial assistance and social services to residential and reintegration centers. The government has also adopted by laws for a better coordination of anti-trafficking activities at central and local level.

There were 101 potential victims who got accommodated in 4 reception centers during 2014, benefiting from the above mentioned services, eleven (11) of whom are Roma and Egyptians.

Civil registration

Within the recommendations that emerged from the February Seminar during 2014, meetings were held in 12 districts where there are large concentrations of Roma families. The aim was to identify unregistered cases and to determine the methodology to solving these cases, whether there would be needed administrative or judicial solutions. Regular civil registration of precious identified cases continued. From this process, 147 children got registered during 2014, as late registrations.

Economic Aid

During 2014 were treated with the Economic Aid 1500 Roma and Egyptian families.

Among 800 beneficiaries of the daily and residential services for third age, 80 beneficiaries are Roma.

Among 653 children (children in need and children with disabilities) that live in public and private residential social care institutions, 155 children are Roma and Egyptians.

Gender Equality

The National Strategy on Gender Equality, Reduction of Gender-Based Violence and Domestic Violence 2011-2015 (revised) and its Action Plan, Approved by DCM no. 573, dated 16.06.2011.

Drafting of the Strategy was supported by the Program “One UN – For Gender Equality in Albania”. The vision enshrined in the Strategy is “Aspire for a society where gender equality is respected and valued, learned, supported and encouraged, where gender-based violence of



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any form is not tolerated, but punished, where violence victims are supported and protected, and where equality in opportunities and treatment is a reality for all, irrespective of their gender”. Eventually, four priorities were laid down:

- 1) Strengthen the institutional and legal mechanism;
- 2) Increase women’s participation in decision-making;
- 3) Ensure economic empowerment of girls and women;
- 4) Reduced gender based violence

The approved Strategy is sensitive to the needs and rights of both genders, and seeks to address them through comprehensive action, keeping due account of the needs of certain categories of disadvantaged women due to disability, social origins, ethnicity or sexual orientation.

7. THE DECADE IN A REVIEW

Approaching the end of the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015 initiative, we would appreciate your reflection on its overall implementation in your country. Therefore, please kindly consider to list up to five principal achievements and five shortcomings in the design and implementation of the Decade National Action Plans/National Roma Integration Strategies.

Such achievements and shortcomings might include policy design, policy implementation, budgeting, specific institutionalized practices, monitoring and evaluation processes, cooperation with key stakeholders. Please be as specific as possible.