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GEAR – Gender Equality and Antidiscrimination for Roma

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ASOCIATIA SERVICIUL APEL

WP3

GENERAL REPORT November 15th, 2024

T3.4 Training for practitioners from public and private entities

GEAR

Co-funded by the European Union

BRIEF of T3.4 – **Training activities for practitioners**

*The **training will comprehend**: a set of common **modules online** (n. 4) and a series of **offline meetings** in each country (n. 3) based on a common programme (4 hours each). Moreover, **2 workshops** (3 hours) will be held at the end of the modules. The course will involve **20 practitioners** in each country.*
The seminars will be held by national and international experts. The first seminar will focus on the first 1-2-3 training modules (numbers of modules are mentioned in T3.2), focusing on the communicative techniques to be adopted to allow the opening of a dialogue on the issue of gender within the Roma community. The second seminar will include 2 modules such as 4 and 7. The focus will be on measures to be taken to combat both domestic violence and exploitation of child labour. These two modules will be developed during the same seminar due to the peculiarity of the theme that needs a strong integration between different services and stakeholders (Police, Social Workers, Labour Control Units etc.). The third seminar will be dedicated to expanding module number 5. This seminar will focus on ways to actively involve women in the wider groups' decision-making process, and on how to support girls in their awareness and emancipation pathway. The fourth seminar will present best practices and the field methodology chosen to implement this project to reach a real engagement and involvement from Roma families and individuals. Aim of this learning module is to reach a good degree of awareness and ownership from the practitioners themselves by using their own experiences of the subject and by promoting their active contribution in terms of contents and inputs. Finally, "case management" and "intervention design" workshops (two additional meetings of 3 hours) will be organised to permit a real hands-on

VALCHID, Hoghilag 22.05.2024. Participants: 24 practitioners aged between 23 and 57 years old. 15 females, 9 males. Trainner: Nicolae Danesan

The first part of the seminar included a broad description of the main topic of the day: 1. Fight forms of discrimination against girls in education skills, development, training, health, and nutrition; 2. Contrast negative cultural practices and attitudes towards girls. All the participants are asked to present themselves and talk about their personal experiences and interests in the development of specific activities related to our main topics. All the participants agree that some of the subjects in the training agenda are already covered by the school program but the lack of professionals in this field might not reach the full potential; also from their perspective certain subjects related to girls' education are better to be approached in a different setting, like a separate class for girls and separate class for boys and this is not an easy task but their made certain progress in this area.

In the last few years, girls have become more aware of their rights and place in society but most families don't encourage them to be independent, they are rather passive towards the sensitiveness of the subject and they are not involved in developing their self-esteem and personal development of their daughters most of the time their income and day to day

struggle keep them less involved in their girl's life; for most families, young girls substitute their mother obligation towards the family, therefore, are more reliable and trustworthy within the hierarchy of the family but their active role does not have an official recognition This matter is also common for the Roma girl population, they have a rather an insignificant recognition level within their families due the poor education and social challenges.

One of the major issues, different forms of discrimination towards girls are quite common and most of the community members acknowledge this issue but they don't have any active solution to tackle this phenomenon due to the long stereotypes history; they are rather passive in finding alternatives and they rely on somebody else to come and fix the problems.; The main challenge here is that most of the locals don't easily accept outside help and they are rather reluctant when it comes down to outside people; therefore the right approach way is to work using locals only. General health and specific issues toward girls health and development during an early age are still taboo in small communities; school system can provide some basic information but more health workers are required

There are some perspectives outside the school program and this variable includes the Roma girls who, for various reasons don't attend classes anymore; woman-run associations are gaining more and more interest in small communities based on their personal connections with the village, they know the history of the family, know their members and are pretty much aware of the overall issues each family is facing the community; this might be one of the main tools that might some changes in the community with a proper budget and personal scheme.

VALCHID, HOGHILAG, SIBIU. 28.05.2024
SUBJECT : 1.POLICY AND ADVOCACY 2.FINANCIAL INCLUSION. Participants: 24 practitioners aged between 23 and 57. 15 F, 9 M. Trainner: Nicolae Danesan.

During the last few years, there have been certain major directions local NGOs are trying to take action, that might bring a certain stability towards the inequities toward the Roma population. Lack of identity documents, Romania ID card. Most Roma people either lost their identity card or never had an identity card; on a local level this issue is not a major concern, most of the Roma population from Hoghilag commune poses at least one ID Card because this is required for getting firewood for winter or social security for their children also the migration phenomenon in Hoghilac area is not so common; there is a seasonal migration towards western countries but most of people are returning during the cold season. The lack of permanent jobs in the area remains one of the major concerns because if you don't have a regular and steady income you cannot afford to pay the mandatory contribution to the national health system.

Another issue local NGOs are trying to tackle is not falling within the limits of the minimum guaranteed income law. For a person, who has no income, one of the possibilities to have medical insurance is to be socially assisted. Having no other income, a person can request the support of the local authority (social service of the town hall) to assist. According to law 95/2006 – reform in the field of health, health insurance chapter, a person who proves that he is socially assisted also fulfils the quality of medical insured.

The problems related to the legalization of permanent residence determine the impossibility of requesting the support of the local authority, to be included in Law 416/2001 - the law of the minimum guaranteed income and, implicitly, leads to the impossibility of registering with a family doctor. From a legal point of view, if you have an identity document and prove that you contribute to the health insurance fund, you should not encounter barriers in terms of access to public health services. It didn't happen like that. There are many Roma who prove that they are medically insured, but they have problems regarding access to public health services. There is also a lot of misconception regarding occasional visits to the doctor's office for adults, if children are involved regular visits are not so rare but only to the local doctor not a specialist outside the community, like for dental care or other medical disciplines. If there is a mobile health clinic that comes to the village this might be one way of getting Roma

population attention. Besides getting their legal paper in order the focus should be on regular check-ups to ensure a more healthy environment.

Harassment and intimidation are common practices in the case of Roma who dare to report cases of discrimination to the CNCD. The fear of being stigmatized and oppressed makes the Roma ignore and overlook such practices. In addition, discrimination legislation does not really protect victims so that they do not drop out during the process. Roma women face the worst level of discrimination when they go to gynecology and pediatric services.

VALCHID, 31.05.2024 - COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT SEMINAR. Participants: 22 practitioners aged between 23 and 57 years old. 14 F, 8 M. Trainner: Nicolae Danesan.

Neighborhoods are active in all communities in Romania, including in isolated villages, only that their role is currently limited to funeral aid and an annual party; there are examples around us of neighborhoods that come out of this pattern and their activity mainly aims at the well-being of the community, from medical assistance programs for the elderly to cultural activities for children. The participants in the meeting believe that these structures that already function as NGOs can mobilize the local population, each one knows the other and intervenes specifically where they know there are problems of a social or humanitarian nature, with the help and support of the local authorities for legitimacy and more good results.

One of the most iconic community events close to our area is The Rhubarb Fest
This initiative was mentioned several times during the open discussions; most of the practitioners from the meeting use it as a positive example event born from the women's community for the entire community. As a structure Rhubarb Fest brings the community together under the umbrella of gastronomy, equity, and multiculturalism. Another community-based event is our own Tuberozelor fest, with lots of locals involved from small producers to artisans and most importantly a very significant volunteer core born several years ago in Hoghilag. This kind of initiative is built for tourists mainly but all the earnings from different activities during the weekend festival are staying in the community. This kind of public event has a significant impact on the micro economy of the village and we believe the community involved just grows naturally from one year to another. Besides the Saxon heritage, the local authorities are also raising awareness about a significant migratory Roma population that used Hoghilag in the past as a gathering point

HOGHILAG, 03.06.2024. BEST PRACTICES and FIELD METHODOLOGY. Participants: 22 practitioners age between 23 and 57 years old. 13 F, 8 M
Trainer: Nicolae Danesan.

In the first part of the meeting, the themes discussed last week were partially resumed, and the new ways in which local organizations can better boost the dynamics of social activities aimed at young girls and the Roma community. Neighborhoods(Vecinatati) could play a crucial role in the development of local social services and could even benefit from government and European subsidies. As a rule, the local councils allocate every year from the general city budget of the community a percentage intended for the development of social and educational activities. The biggest challenge within these structures is to apply for various local and regional grants and to build a team to cover the bureaucratic part of the operation.

To be taken into account as good practices various initiatives previously deployed in our region we need to focus and following some basic criteria before we make an actual step:
- Direct focus on anti-discrimination and/or Roma participation in decision-making.
- Attention to gender issues (both the non-discrimination of Roma women and promoting the participation of Roma women equally);
- Coordination and coherence with other policies at the regional and / or local level, as well as at central level, taking into account the needs of the local Roma community; this might be for a long term approach,.
- Addressing several aspects of a given problem in a holistic approach where posssible;
- Roma participation in the design of public policies and their application;

- High probability of producing multiplier effects.

For most of the meeting we used a specific guide created within the project "National Platform of Good Practices for Roma" confined by the European Commission, General Directorate of Justice and Consumers through the Program for Rights, Equality and Citizenship 2014-2020.

Later on the discussions were focused towards identifying several ways to eliminate communication barriers between local authorities and Roma communities. There is no universal recipe, each community has its particularities, but they all have in common direct communication, without it mutual trust cannot be built. Direct communication, no matter the channel, might also facilitate a better perception of new initiatives meant to bring a positive impact on their lives.

VALCHID, 04.06.2024 - Protection of the girl's participation in social and political life.
Participants: 24 practitioners, age: between 23 and 57 years old. Trainner: Nicolae Danesan.

Although gender-based discrimination is prohibited under every human rights treaty and the progress made towards securing women’s rights globally, both women and girls continue to experience discrimination and violence, being denied their equality and dignity, and even life in extreme situations, the phenomenon itself isn't new and it doesn't go away although in small communities it's not so obvious in the first place. On the other hand, if you take time and spend it among the locals it is quite difficult to ignore certain negative practices that tend to spread among generations.

This discrimination and violence against women and girls, deeply rooted in the fabric of societies, is persistent and systematic. And in recent years, there has been a recurrence of scepticism against and denial of international standards concerning women's human rights. For instance, during the Covid 19 pandemic, the pressure on women and young girls became even more aggressive due to the restriction of free movement. Stay-at-home restrictions and other measures restricting the movement of people contribute to an increase in gender-based violence, a finding confirmed by all the participants in the meeting, they even had several examples in the nearby communities. For now there are no solid plans in order to combat similar events, there are a few attempts made on the european level in Western countries but for Romania is just a strategy on paper. One of the approaches that might actually work would be declaring gender-based violence-related services as essential and expanding the availability of alternative accommodation to avoid confinement with abusers; This kind of approach works in bigger cities with better infrastructure and budget not so much in small closed communities like Hoghilah, Valchid and Prod.

Another critical issue that became obvious during the pandemic was the closure of schools and day-care centers/kindergartens. The decision affected woman parents that had no choice and took additional caregiving responsibilities. This also meant, further restrictions in keeping a regular job and other economic opportunities, for that reason the amount of unpaid work carried by women in the last few years increased exponentially. For that reason in any kind of crisis, women and girls are likely to be hit the hardest as schools are closed around the world.

In our region, Hoghilag and component villages of Valchid and Prod, young girls were often removed from or leave schools first during a health emergency – even if certain schools remain open – due to increased care work at home. With school closures, including in humanitarian and development settings or in households living in poverty, roma girls may also lost access to safe environments, nutritious food and gender-specific services that schools sometimes provide.

VALCHID, Sibiu, 11.06.2024 - Negative cultural practices and attitudes towards girls – meeting II. Participants: 23 practitioners, aged between 23 and 57 years old.
15 female, 7 male.Trainner: Nicolae Danesan.

In the opening part of the meeting in Valchid the trainer presented some general guidelines within which the activities and exercises will take place. Their purpose is to obtain relevant opinions in real time from the staff employed in the social sector, dominant in the rural environment in the project area. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN General Assembly, 1948; 1989 respectively) define traditional or cultural practices considered 'harmful' as those that hold negative consequences for the physical or psychological health of affected individuals and have adverse social and political implications

Whilst both boys and girls are subjected to negative practices in our society it is women and girls who suffer the most thereby this is a serious gendered issue. This kind of discrimination is all the more amplified in the Roma community which most of the time is devoid of any form of institutional protection. Even if at the public administration level there are measures to mitigate this effect, in practice the limited resources prevent concrete actions that will have a long-term effect. Again, the NGO sector can cover part of the counseling and involvement of Roma in society, but as long as there is no constant source of funding, the actions and interventions have no effect in the medium and long term.

Romania is still at the beginning regarding the classroom approach to spiritual education and equality of opportunity. For now, this translates mostly to formal regulations for the prohibition of ethnic segregation, the right of children with disabilities to participate in mainstream education, and equal rights of both sexes to education. In the educational process, there are rarely present elements that realize, day by day, the process of an education in the spirit of diversity and opportunity.

After the break, the trainer lead the way to the second part of the meeting. Not surprisingly, in South-Eastern Europe in the “traditional family,” there is a "preference" of the parents for boys to the detriment of girls. This attitude, even if it is condemnable at present, also has practical reasons, for boys it is "easier" to integrate, to have access to a job, and even to the health infrastructure. On the other hand, the girls are labeled from the start as "housewives" and practically have a double standard to overcome. In recent years, the trend has naturally softened due to free migration on the European continent, in this way, even small communities such as Valchid have access to a different perspective on the position of both sexes in society. There are companies that prefer to hire seasonal workers, couples because in this way they consider that even seasonal employees make an additional commitment, they are more disciplined when it comes to work conditioned by the direct need to support their own family/send money in the country of origin and in some case to bring together the whole family in the foster country, attend school her, get social assistance and proper health insurance.

HOGHILAG, 18.06.2024. Meeting Fight forms of discrimination against girls
Participants: 24 practitioners, age between 23 and 57 years old. 15 female, 9 male.
Trainner: Nicolae Danesan.

Youngster learn best in schools that provide safety and social support, it’s about a safe environment that may be absent at their home. Effective health education and life-skills programmes show that it is important to use participatory learning activities to develop social skills, and to include practical and relevant learning activities within which pupils can rehearse positive communication strategies. The learning activities are suitable for use in a range of subjects, including the school’s literacy development programme, social studies, pastoral care, life-skills, civics, health, sexuality education and values education programmes.

We cannot neglect the impact and influence that churches have in our communities. Many of the programs aimed at young people and especially girls are run in one form or another through the church. This represents an alternative to formal school education or primary education at home. Girls or young people, in general, spend more time outside the environment they come from and have the chance to develop new skills and even see differently certain things that, for example, are missing from the education received at home or simply the best examples do not come from their family.

There are many forms of discrimination against girls and sometimes it is easier to focus on the younger generation to make them understand some basic principles that they are not aware of yet, just from the information they get from school or home personal examples. The young are more receptive to one-one communication and in theory, are more receptive to open discussions.

Having these conversations about the false beliefs of love and about healthy relationships and consent will mean that youngsters will feel more comfortable sharing their feelings as they become romantically interested in others. These conversations can also bring up other important topics, like treating other people kindly, breaking up kindly, and setting and respecting boundaries.

After the break the topic of "women neighborhoods" appears again, especially those founded or led by women. In short, the formal education at school has no way of covering in depth the taboo topics such as violence directed against women or girls. The vast majority of cases of violence are not reported to the authorities, who are not allowed to intervene anyway. For this reason, NGOs can make up for the lack of action and even offer psychological and legal assistance when acts of violence are reported. The presence of NGOs in the life of the community is increasing, but for legitimacy, the involvement and constant financial support of local public authorities is needed.

Also through local NGOs or associations like "neighbourhood", young women can have access to more information, including funding sources that can help them set up a small business to support themselves without having to leave in the city or abroad. There are financing programs available to rural women and girls, some of them financed by Local Action Groups (LAGs).

VALCHID, 25.06.2024. Intervention design workshop. Participants: 23 practitioners, age between 23 and 57 years old. 15 female, 7 male. Trainner: Nicolae Danesan.

All the participants are asked to actively participate to the meeting, more than 70% of the participants come from two distinct communities, Bradeni and Hoghilag, they work in the public school system and are quite aware of the particularities of each community; the two communities are similar in terms of population composition and face similar challenges

A possible approach to tackle direct discrimination and to keep Roma children involved in the school system might be to create a day centre designed for children from grades I-IV grades. The day centre could provide several packages for families in difficult situations ease up the pressure on the public system and approach the dropout problem
school at the level of primary grades. Everyday services including direct counselling provided by NGOs with school support if calibrated right may contribute to the prevention of premature marriage, immigration, family abandonment, unregistered work and juvenile delinquency.

General features of the intervention: The day centre should address primarily children who have poor academic performance and low emotional intelligence. Parents help too little (if not at all) and the school's expectations are uncalibrated. The family has inadequate income du the lack of a steady job, poor living conditions, low level of education. It is not socially integrated and non-participatory in terms of the education act. The school has a busy schedule and limited resources. Student-centered education, teacher motivation and family relationships are often deficient. The individual does not show interest, initiative, or availability. Volunteering non-existing concept.

General criteria for the selection of an assisted person:
- income - below subsistence level

- housing (improper, unsanitary, overcrowded housing)
- educational (risk of not enrolling in first grade and dropping out of school)
- family size (large, single-parent families)
- psycho-affective (risk of physical, mental, sexual abuse, neglect)

Main intervention services:
- two cooked meals each day, two dishes for lunch and one dinner
- homework support for the next day, including services for recovery of delays due to non-participation in a form of education preschool;
- stimulating creativity in workshops (dance, music, drawing, painting, ceramics, puppet theatre);
- recreational activities (collective and sports games, reading, music auditions, theatre);
- 1-1 counselling sessions;
- one or two days a week dedicated to body hygiene.
- medical care and basic dental treatment.
- psychological assessments (use of addictive substances,)

In terms of a monthly or yearly budget, it's a bit difficult to set a number but there are several financing options if an NGO is the main applicant.

HOGHILAG, Sibiu, 05.08.2024 - Case management workshop. Participants: 23 practitioners, aged between 23 and 57 years old. 15 female, 7 male. Trainner: Nicolae Danesan.

Health professionals, especially female doctors, can bring an increase in the level of health and trust toward health concerns in a closed community, especially if we are talking about prevention and periodic medical checks. The variable is their access to the community. Because often traveling to a medical center outside the community raises barriers on several levels, one of the correct approaches would be the introduction of mobile health caravans that periodically visit the communities

One of our area's key features is that we are not dealing with Roma camps in general, but rather with compact Roma communities. Access to education and health in theory is open to everyone, but in reality, social customs say something: women, especially Roma girls,don't have their own autonomy and if they want to go to a doctor outside the village, they must be permanently accompanied or have the explicit consent of the head of the family. for this reason, one of the approaches that could work better is to encourage and promote medical caravans, mobile health laboratories that have access to the place where they live and their presence is authorized/validated by the mayor's office or the informal leaders of the community, including those of the church regardless of confession. For boys, it's much easier than girls. They have a much greater sphere of freedom. They can go out, for example to the cinema, youth centre or disco, and they aren't required to take someone with them to supervise every step they take.

In the brainstorming part of our workshop, participants provided a few ideas on how to improve the perception of the health sector in relation with the Roma population, drawing on their experience and expertise. Participants of the workshop were recruited via email invitation followed by a telephone call, usually, email invites tend to be ignored and therefore a direct phone call might get better feedback. Most of the participants are already involved on different levels in the local community and they are quite aware of the lack of basic infrastructure for health assistance and education.

If solutions could be found for basic medical care, including preventive care, on the education side and the inclusion of young Roma in the public education system, there are already initiatives carried out by local public authorities, a hot meal served at school, for example, already determines parents with limited financial means to send their children to school and this phenomenon is equally widespread in Roma communities. to increase the availability of adults towards education, the participants of the workshop believe that complementary

activities could be carried out at the end of the classes, only that as a rule this segment is covered by NGOs that are usually underfunded and depend exclusively on European grants

SUMMARY T3.4

Initially 30-35 people signed up for the training activities, in the end an average of 22 people participated per meeting, age between 23 and 57 years. The share of female participants was double compared to the number of male participants. The average duration of the meetings was 3.5 hours. The 9 meetings took place between 22.05.2025 - 05.08.2024, due to the busy schedule of the participants, the meetings scheduled for the second part of 2024 were re-scheduled several times because the minimum number of participants was not reached. We also tried to schedule some of the meetings online because the participants come from different communities but due to the lack of reaction we chose the classic option, physical meetings organized in the project area in Valchid and Hoghilag villages. About 80% of the participants are teachers at primary and secondary schools in Hoghilag, and Valchid, both villages are from Sibiu County, and the remaining 20% work at local town halls in the social assistance department. Among the participants, more than 20% of the participants are active volunteers at the NGOs in the area, mainly women with a professional background in education.

At the end of the sessions, 24 participants, with an effective attendance of at least 82%, received participation diplomas based on their presence and active involvement in activities. Participants in the thematic meetings have received by e-mail, in the last part of August, an evaluation and feedback questionnaire created by Digivis and translated into Romanian.

https://digivis.eu/lime/index.php/298263?lang=ro

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