

# Integrated & Intercultural Approach to Roma Inclusion

for the Focsani City Urban Marginalized Areas

## **APPROACH TO ROMA INCLUSION FOR THE FOCSANI CITY URBAN MARGINALIZED AREAS**

**Part of 3 synergic community-led interventions :**

- 2016-2018 Red Cross Participatory Community Development - Local Work Group, community facilitator**
- 2017-2018 ROMACT - Local Action Group (LAG) taskforce member**
- 2017 - present day Local Action Group Unirea Focsani Association - community-led local development (CLLD) Local Development Strategy, volunteer since May 2020**

**In 2016 , RC NS of Sweden and Romania drafted a Memorandum in order to support roma Communities - 4 NSs Branches, one was Vrancea County RC (Harghita, Mureş, Vrancea and Tulcea)**

**2017 was the peak year for community-led interventions in Focsani**









# PARTICIPATORY COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT



## PARTICIPATORY COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (1)

The initial funding opportunity for PCD was quite flexible, and in itself a learning and adaptation process at organizational level for a participatory approach to marginalized urban roma communities in RO.

Initial reticence towards the participatory method that does not rely on **providing emergency aid**. The reality in the communities was different from projections, with member motivations and interests other than those expected. The role of facilitator is one of great challenge to succeed in mobilizing and involving the communities.

Project specific terms / language was a **major barrier** initially (fancy words to be made simple, accessible). **Using creative tools** (graphic facilitation for LDS, voting with sticker bullets for prioritization )

Disadvantaged communities women have little opportunity to present their ideas, opinions, and all the discussions about the needs of the community were monopolized by men. The methodology provided a simple, accessible communication channel for the women to present their ideas, visions about the project, local action plan, development strategy and all project's activities (**Women Community Champions**).



## PARTICIPATORY COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (2)

Community facilitation actions for

- the development of community micro-actions,
- the proposed Strategies (ROMACT - Local Action Plan, CLLD - Local Development Strategy for Marginalized Urban Areas).

Initial resistance based on community member belief and previous experience that projects (especially with **European funds**) are a way for *"others to make money with our poverty"*

When a greater number of vulnerable people, especially Roma, were involved in community development, the existing mentality in the disadvantaged community was overcome (eg.: living anchored in the present time universe, the here and now, where *everything must happen either quickly, with minimal effort, or if there is a personal benefit*).

In time, community members opened to the team of facilitators and to participatory intervention. As result of the facilitation processes, first signs of acceptance, of building trust, participation of vulnerable people happened.

## PARTICIPATORY COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT (3)

Having / Seeing the results, following the implementation of the first community micro-projects and the accomplishment of the activities desired by the community, represented the concrete and necessary proofs of the fact that it can be done by them, for them and especially what ***they have chosen***, to transform the community in which they live for the better.

Through the process, vulnerable people begin to make their voices heard as representatives of the disadvantaged community, to communicate effectively with other groups and with the representatives of local authorities (members of ROMACT taskforce, members of Local Action Group Unirea Focsani Asociation - CLLD).

To mitigate potential risks, the C.E.A. (Community Engagement and Accountability) approach was used throughout the Community intervention, which involves a permanent management of information coming from the community, including rumors that escalate in the process, elements related to competition for prestige, regarding decision-making transparency, communication, accountability, etc.



## KEY INSIGHTS

- Prestige competition and Community Engagement and Accountability
- Developing trust
- Timeline : duration, political background
- Maintaining the results long term continuous support
- Community champions turnover
- Being proud of tangible results - *"We made something obvious through the project. So other people have seen that we are able to do something for ourselves "* - Roma community champion

## 5 YEARS LATTER ! 2022 VS 2017

Community structure shifted in time (eg. one ghetto was demolished in 2019)

EU mechanisms implementation duration (CLLD): +5 , +7 years long

The unexpected pandemic effects on community development

### ***Conclusions:***

In itself, the participatory process - through which people can feel the ownership of the process - creates a positive learning experience at the grass root level.

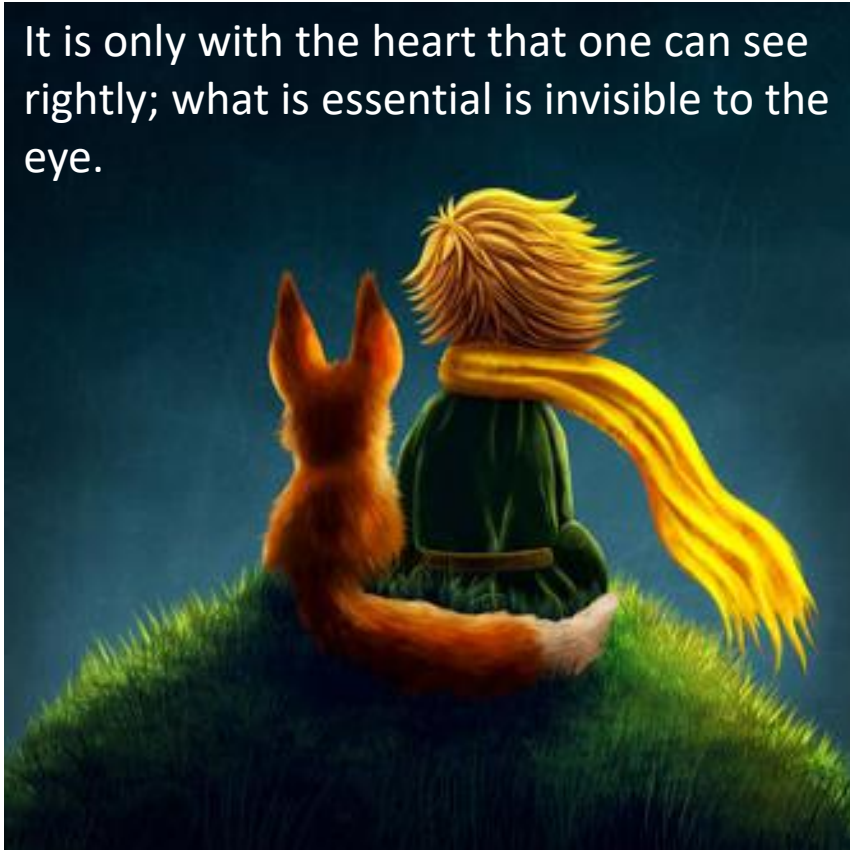
The sustainability (from the micro-projects, to the action plans and strategies) is directly related to the continued presence and involvement in supporting these marginalized communities.

Deep changes can be achieved by constantly encouraging people involved and creating a favorable context for changes.



... community facilitation ...

It is only with the heart that one can see rightly; what is essential is invisible to the eye.



Empowerment of the  
**Community before  
methodology ...**

**In life, it is more important to start  
something than to finish it.  
Even imperfect things have their place  
in the bigger picture!**



**Thank you!**