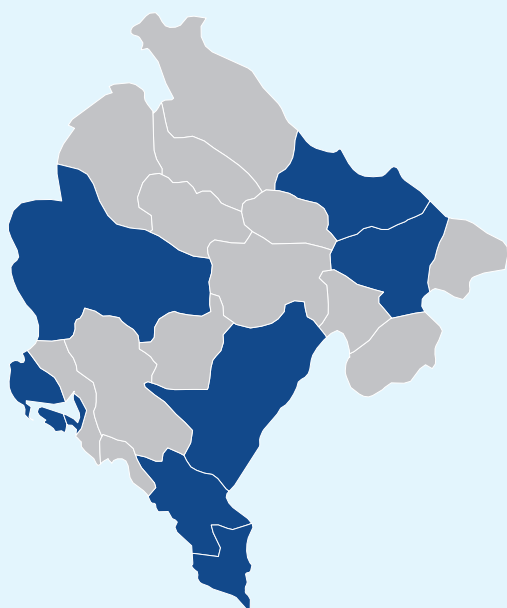
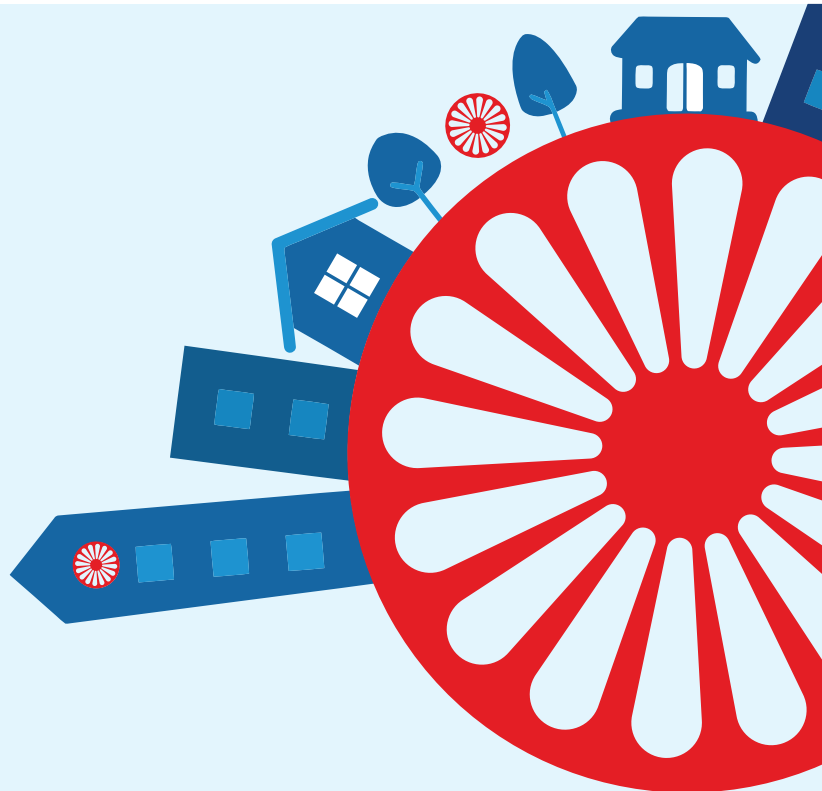


ROMA ACTED

*Promoting good governance
and Roma empowerment
at local level*



Montenegro



**Identifying and mapping relevant
challenges faced by Roma and
Egyptian community in Montenegro**

Situation analysis

Promoting Good Governance And Roma Empowerment At Local Level

Funded
by the European Union
and the Council of Europe



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Implemented
by the Council of Europe



*Promoting good governance
and Roma empowerment
at local level*

SITUATION ANALYSIS 2019

IDENTIFYING AND MAPPING RELEVANT CHALLENGES FACED BY ROMA AND EGYPTIAN COMMUNITY IN MONTENEGRO

ROMACTED Programme

Promoting Good Governance And Roma Empowerment At Local Level

A European Union and Council of Europe Joint Programme

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Research Overview

Various reports show that in comparison with other minorities in Montenegro, Roma and Egyptian (RE) population is facing the greatest risk of **social exclusion**. This phenomenon is likely to be due to a number of **mutually reinforcing** cultural and social factors. Probably the most frequently cited of them is low educational level of RE community, which in turn influences their possibilities on the labor market. Subsequently, this has an enormous impact on living conditions and health situation of the Roma and Egyptian population. Last, but not the least, part of the RE community in Montenegro are displaced persons from Kosovo, who differ from the general population both in language and cultural norms which they adhere to.

Government of Montenegro plays an active role in facilitating integration of RE population in Montenegrin society. Intensified cooperation with international partners started with “Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015”, an initiative of 12 European countries to improve socio-economic status and social inclusion of the Roma people across the South-East Europe. National priorities in this field were defined in detail by Strategy for the Social Inclusion of Roma and Egyptians 2008-2012, which was followed by two more (for period 2012-2016 and 2016-2020).

In parallel with that, other programs have been carried out in association with the EU and other international organizations. One of them is **ROMACTED** program. Main goals of this program implemented jointly by the Council of Europe and EU are:

- supporting capacity-building of local authorities and participation of Roma citizens in local plans and projects,
- improving and expanding institutions’ capacities, knowledge and skills in working for Roma inclusion and
- empowering members of the RE community both on the individual and community level

In order to fulfill the goals of the ROMACTED program and help both RE community and local authorities in Montenegro to improve RE community’s position, a **“road map”** of future is needed. This situational analysis represents *a profile of municipality concerning Roma and Egyptian population*. As such, it contains both positive and negative examples and it should serve as a record of needs and challenges RE population faces in each of eight municipalities taking part in ROMACTED: *Bar, Berane, Bijelo Polje, Herceg Novi, Nikšić, Podgorica, Tivat and Ulcinj*.

Situation analyses 2019 project was implemented by the team De Facto Consultancy team consisting of 10 members. Core of the implementing team consisted of the following individuals:

- Olivera Komar, PhD, an expert in social science with more than 10 years of experience, in charge of supervision of the project,
- Nemanja Batričević, PhD candidate, an expert in methods, in charge of developing research tools and writing final report and
- Ana Marjanović, Darja Daša Šuković and Stevan Kandić, in charge of fieldwork coordination and assistance in data analysis.

During project duration, implementing team has gathered large amount of the material from focus groups and interviews¹. All of the research material is the property of Council of Europe, while depersonalized transcripts of focus groups and interviews can be presented to interested parties on request.

¹ More than 600 hundred pages of transcripts.

Metodology

For the purpose of studying situation of Roma and Egyptian (RE) population in Montenegro, we conducted individual and group interviews with **three groups of stakeholders** – representatives of local authorities, facilitators and Roma community – in all eight municipalities participating in ROMACTED program.

In total, we conducted **16 focus groups with members of Roma community** (2 per municipality). In one focus group male and female participant were mixed together. In second focus group, we talked only to women. This was purposefully done to creating the atmosphere of openness and trust, to foster group cohesion and foster more truthful answers with respect to all issues, including those, related to family violence, women reproductive health and parenting style, which are of sensitive nature and likely to elicit biased responses when asked in front of male spectators². In each municipality we also conducted **8 interviews with facilitators**. The role facilitators play changes across municipalities, but their main job is to establish communication between the RE community and local authorities, convey the needs of the RE community, and help transform them into policy initiatives. Lastly, we organized **8 interviews with representatives of local governments**, in which we tried to see to what extent local authorities share the views of the community. Through the **“triangulation”** of these sources, we try to provide evidence and information as complete as possible.

The goal of situational analysis is not to create a complete overview of what services local governments offer with respect to RE population³. Instead, we aim at providing an answer to following question: ***What are the major problems Roma and Egyptian population faces at the municipal level? How efficient services and human capacities provided by the local governments are? What can be done in future to improve their status?*** Thus, our goal is not to quantify, but rather to understand problems. Needless to say, this has important consequences for our findings and conclusions we are able to make. We recommend users of this report to read it with full awareness of the context in which data was collected and the nature of data itself. In that sense, we would like to underline that information we collected during group and individual interviews are ***attitudes, opinions, beliefs, evaluations*** and ***impressions*** of people we talked to. These personal accounts are not necessarily perfectly aligned with facts on the field. Again, the purpose of this research is to provide in-depth knowledge not only on ***how*** stakeholders see certain events or policies, but also ***why***.

Our analysis focuses on number of topics, broadly categorized in five areas: ***education, housing, employment, social protection, and health***⁴. Yet, one should have in mind that time constraints and the dynamic of group interviews do not allow for equal representation of all topics. While we were interested in hearing answers that cover entirety of life experience relevant to RE population, we allowed participants to “decide” which topic deserves more time and discussion. This means that a certain issue cannot be considered unproblematic only by virtue of not being extensively discussed during focus groups. Participants, although appeared very representative of the rest of the RE population, are marked by their personal or experiences of places they live. As a result, they bring experiences and opinion that are highly context dependent, and one should always review them with a such.

2 The only exception from this strategy occurred in Podgorica and Herceg Novi, where women from mixed group asked to be moved to women focus group as they felt “uncomfortable” talking with/in front of men.

3 An overview of this kind is available in other segment of this project called „Research of Services“.

4 Nonetheless, throughout the text we discuss many other important issues which are closely tied with these broad areas, such as *legal status, cultural identity*, etc.

Bar

In the interest of space, in the following section dedicated to municipalities, focus is put either on issues that are specific to particular municipality or on the same issues that are being manifested (or explained) in a distinct manner. In the last section, dedicated to general conclusions and policy recommendations, we cast light to number of problems and solutions we have observed across all municipalities. These represent issues that trouble RE population regardless of their locality, certain tendencies of local authorities that should be changed, and prejudices we can debunk based on the data we collected during our research.

According to the 2011 Census, there are 203 Roma persons and 33 Egyptian persons living in the municipality of Bar. Although it is not possible to accurately assess this number in 2019, representative of local government freely estimated this number to be between 400 and 500⁵. Based on the interviews conducted, we can conclude that the RE population living in municipality of Bar, together with their fellow co-ethnics in Ulcinj, faces the most **serious obstacles** out of all municipalities in the ROMACTED program. Besides personal accounts we collected during interviews, we can support this claim based on few general observations. First, this is the first Local Action Plan (LAP) being prepared for this municipality. Second, there are no active NGOs dealing specifically with rights of RE population.

Education

In contrast to members of the Roma community who reiterated their belief in importance of education, facilitator noticed that majority of the parents fail to truly recognize the **value of education**. According to this view, lack of understanding of long-term benefits an education is being clearly reflected in children's lack of interest and "inappropriate" behavior in the classroom. This, in turn, does nothing but further complicates already difficult integration of Roma in wider society.

The one solution that seems to work great wherever is employed is having **assistants** for social inclusion in the area of education (so-called mediators) mediating between school administration and RE community. However, this solution is not readily available in the municipality of Bar. Despite the fact that local authorities are willing to equip the office in the elementary school for assistants to use and that there are two trained assistants in Bar, no such support is being provided at the moment. Namely, due to the rules laid down by the Ministry of Education which state that assistant can be employed for **no less than 70 students**⁶, neither of them is currently hired. Based on the opinion of the facilitators, one of the key obstacles towards reducing the problem of integration in the area education. Why? Our interviewees argued that potentials benefits are multiple⁷. First, an assistant can indirectly⁸ help Roma children improve their school performance, and reduce pressure on their, often uneducated, parents. Second, they can help bridge language barrier many in the Bar municipality have, as many of them speak either Roma or Albanian language as their mother tongue. Third, as very often teachers have no "luxury" of dedicating special time to Roma children, mere presence of assistants can increase long-term interest in studying.

5 He described his estimation as „unverified dana“.

6 According to interviewees, this rule is being changed starting with 2019/2020 school year. To the best of our knowledge, the new rule would allow schools with less RE children to require funding for an assistant from Ministry of Education.

7 This is also supported by the data collected in municipalities that have assistants in the area of education.

8 Although their main role is not helping children with the content of lectures, we observed that in many cases they remain open to assisting children any way possible.

That there is a room for this kind of improvements we can see from Roma children's description of classroom experience, which seems to be marked by lack of integration and clear discrimination. One Roma person recalled her personal experience:

” *I used to sit in back bench, because no one wanted to sit with me. (...) Kids in front of me used to blame whenever something happens”.*

Similar experience has been reported by many other Roma participants we talked to, one of who decided to spend last two years of elementary education out of the regular classroom:

” *I used to go to school until 6th grade, then I started part-time education [“vanredno”], because it was simply better for me”.*

With regards to the **drop-out**, two major issues were reported by the facilitator. First, due to the frequent **migrations**, children often leave and come back years later. While seemingly schools are open to take them in upon their return, the communication with parents is restricted as they often change location and phone numbers. Second, like in many other municipalities, it has been conveyed that there is a clear **gender imbalance** when it comes to drop-out, as a result of expectations of girls helping with the housework, as well as entering marriages at very early age.

Unquestionably the most important difficulty towards education of Roma children, in view of Roma population, are bad **material conditions**. Municipality or Ministry of Education are providing free books and transportation, but according to all accounts, they need additional support in order to provide adequate support to their children. Simply, Roma parents are not able to provide for school supplies and living conditions which would make studying at home possible. They clearly tied living conditions both to higher drop-out rates and increased discrimination. As one parent puts it:

” *We experience great difficulties to educate our children. Living conditions in our settlement, without water and electricity, at the place where public landfill is located... they go to school dirty and they are laughed at by other children.”*

Facilitator confirmed that indeed often parents decide not to send their children to school because they have nothing clean to wear. Eventually, this leads to children dropping-out from school.

” *Nobody wants to go where he is not loved. No person loves being at place where he is not welcome, so you avoid it”*, one parent summarized it.

Housing

Unlike in some other areas, with regards to housing it necessary to make a distinction between **domicile** and **displaced** (“*raseljena*”) members of Roma and Egyptian population. The distinction is worth mentioning with regards to both major housing issues: 1) the quality of housing; and 2) legal status (ownership) over the housing units and surrounding land.

Domicile Roma population in Bar predominantly lives in municipality-owned **barracks (slums)**, while displaced RE population, who mostly came from Kosovo, live in an isolated and disorderly settlements. Housing conditions in settlements Volujica and Sokolana, however, are inappropriate as they mostly live without electricity and clean water⁹. According to the interviewees, situation in Sokolana settlement is especially troublesome. There, access to the settlement is of primary concern, as well as close proximity to the landfill which has profound consequences for their health.

With respect to the legal status of housing units, land on which Roma settlements are built are either owned by the government or municipality, making them essentially **illegal**. During focus groups, participants made it clear they are rather dissatisfied with the fact that Roma people in other municipalities were “given” apartments, while they still live in inadequate barracks, from which they can be evicted at any given time. As one participant put it this way:

” *The municipality and everyone have forgotten us, we are thrown into a bush where nobody can see us, nobody comes to visit and see how Roma people live.*”

In contrast, opinion of the facilitator is that local government appears to be willing to help and provide social housing for RE population, but that this openness was not properly utilized. When asked what desirable outcome would be, to begin with, participants narrowed it down to **government providing land** where they can legally build and improve their living conditions long-term, without fear of devastation.

In terms of quality of housing, almost all participants in focus groups reported living in a single-room barracks with **improvised bathrooms**, without kitchen and with inadequately fortified rooftops. Evidently, this disrupts Roma population deeply as it affects their ability to maintain households clean, their health, chances for employment, as well as physical safety. One Roma mother explained her struggle:

” *...We clean for nothing, for nothing, (...) rats come out because of all the mud. We don't even have a bathroom. Instead, when we are having a bath rest of the people can see us.*”

Current state of the housing makes it not only unpleasant, but **unsafe**. Female Roma participants vividly described her household during the winter:

” *Snakes pass across our doorstep. We see them, but we are scared to set a fire because whole Sokolana may burn down, due to all the trash. (...) and rats...they come into our houses and eat our bread and cheese.*”

They want authorities to help them build houses from solid materials, to help Sokolana to be cleaned and concreted:

” *If you want us to stay there, asphalt our community. Give us materials to build... (another participant): I was living for so long in a mud, but don't let my children get sick before we get an apartment.*”

⁹ Even when they are connected to the local utility network, they struggle to pay their bills. They seemingly “negotiate” electricity and often illegally connect to other settlements. Furthermore, inhabitants have reported trash not being regularly taken away, as they are “not officially recognized as a separate settlement”.

Representative of local government agreed with such characterization of their living conditions and quality of housing. However, they urged Roma community to be more active in communicating their problems towards institutions. As reaction to a focus group participant who admitted that “they never asked anyone for anything, her reminded that they, as administration, cannot act unless requests are submitted officially and there is a “written trace”.

Employment

Just like in other municipalities that are part of ROMACTED, the major problem in employment area is the **lack of qualifications**. Majority of Roma in Bar are unskilled workers, which makes their employment even more difficult¹⁰. According to facilitator’s opinion, another obstacle is employers lack of trust, as they often recognize them as unstable partly due to prejudice, and partially due to their own lack of responsibility at workplace. Third issue is lack of cooperation with Employment Agency that makes it more difficult to communicate the needs of working Roma population.

Based on interviews we conducted, Roma population is willing to work, rather than relying on social welfare. In words of one participant from Bar:

” I ready to suffer, if need be... I don’t have to rest at all for a whole day. But I know for whom I am working, for my kids...to progress”.

Yet, they themselves seem aware of the problem of **begging** within Roma community. While this is often used excuse for maintaining existing ethnic prejudices, they believe that it is a small portion of their community who are forced to do it in order to provide basic existence. Although initial reaction was to say that begging does not occur at all, two participants in Bar admitted that they were forced to beg at one point in their life:

” I have to admit, my wife and my daughter begged too, we lived as tenants in Old Bar, and I was not there for a while...they had to do it”.

They also reported Roma from Serbia coming to beg, and thus hurting reputation of local Roma community. Related to this, it should be noted that they have never heard of assistants in the area of employment.

Participants from Bar reported they experience **discrimination** at work, similar to the one we observed in other municipalities. This discrimination is manifested in different ways, ranging from type of work to its value (salary). First, even when they have a job, they are forced to either do heavy physical work or to work for Public Waste Disposal (Javno komunalno preduzeće - Čistoća) company:

” You know how they talk...he got employed to collect garbage, raise the contingents... simply they think that I am not meant for better and that do not know better. I personally heard them say to their colleagues that we are not for better”. Another participant was fast to reply: “I am not ashamed to work in Public Waste, because I work for myself and my family.”

¹⁰ The facilitator claims that many of the Roma in Bar do not identify themselves as Roma, but by religion or other nationality (Montenegrins). It is, therefore, difficult to make precise records of the number of Roma at the Bureau of Labor.

Health

Based on the data collected, health-related issues RE population experience appear to simply be a part of a “vicious circle” comprised of - **poor material conditions, unresolved legal status, quality of housing and hard physical work**. In other words, insufficient awareness of the importance of preventive care of health can be expected among people who need to fight for existence on a daily basis. The central problem to providing adequate health care to Roma in Bar municipality lies in their legal status¹¹. According to the facilitator’s opinion, majority of Roma falling into a “displaced persons” category do not have documents that can grant them health coverage for any complex medical procedure. Additional confusion is brought to health system by frequent use of someone else’s health booklets in order to exercise citizen’s health rights or simply buy medicine.

Like in many other municipalities in Montenegro, the number of Roma children vaccinated cannot be accurately confirmed. Parents in focus groups, for the most part, reported that their kids are **immunized**. Yet, that we cannot take this information on its face values became evident when facilitator offered a conflicting opinion, suggesting that parents often hide that children are not immunized from fear of a potential sanctions. In a similar fashion, heavy housework, large families and great distance from hospitals, make it “impossible” for women to visit **gynecologist** regularly. Hence, women reported visiting “female doctor” only when delivering or in very late stages of pregnancy. One female participant from Bar described problem of maintaining health in current living conditions in a following way:

” *Every day I was washing, while I needed to go in for a surgery as my ovary broke from being overweight... I got rheumatism on my hands and legs. My lungs hurt... I go through the trash cans all day”.*

Obviously, solving issues of legal status as well as improving living conditions would be best way to tackle health-related problems of Roma population. However, according to the facilitator, significant improvements can be achieved through better information strategy and communication between different parts of health system. Workshops on preventive health as well as designated mobile teams that would regularly visit Roma settlements could be a way to start. Although this is not a problem reserved only for this municipality, there are no health mediators that can help community members exercise their rights in these conditions or facilitate communication between Roma community and local health institutions.

Representative of municipality agree that more should be done on the field, as they are “unprotected due to living conditions”. However, he again pointed out the responsibility of RE community:

” *I will also say, they should change attitude among themselves, to see health as more important. To start taking better care of their children and themselves.”*

11 This issue has been, for the most part, addressed across Roma communities in Montenegro. In Bar, however, participants reported that “in each family there one or two people who do not have a status or citizenship”.

Berane

In 2011, RE population in Berane consisted of 531 Roma persons and 170 Egyptian persons. Based on evaluation of municipality representatives, this number is expected to be larger for approximately 200 individuals. Though, as they pointed out, it is hard to accurately account for migration rate. Two settlements in Berane are predominantly inhabited by the RE population, Riverside and Talum. Riverside settlement is almost exclusively occupied by displaced person who arrived in 1999 from Kosovo. In Talum, however, mostly domicile RE population lives mixed with other local ethnicities¹².

Education

Two **assistants** in social inclusion for the area of education are employed in Berane. However, they are both employed in a one school (Radomir Mitrović), while Vuk Karadžić elementary school has none, as number of Roma students is “only” 25. This have created visible differences between communities too. Although both communities have mediators, they both come from the same community. Expectedly, children from that particular community attend school at significantly higher rate. This brought focus group to an interesting discussion on importance of mediators being **embedded in the RE communities**. Psychologist from elementary school summarized troubles of “outsider” educational workers:

” I can walk as much as I want. I simply don't know where they live.”

During the interview with representatives of local authorities, their effectiveness was also brought up:

” One of them is member of RE community. She knows whole settlement, and if kid does not show up, she knows whether child is sick, or it went begging.”

Another participant followed up:

” They are our right hand. (...) they keep track of regularity of attendance and serve as a link between school and parents.”

Parents of children studying in Vuk Karadžić are also aware of positive impact of assistants. One of them recalled:

” We had a mediator, until last year. She was helping us a lot, but now we have serious problems.”

Similar to some other municipalities, **transportation** to school was discussed as important issue for RE community. However, not all stakeholders agree on this. On one hand, parents say they are afraid to let children walk to the school; and on the other, representatives of municipality claim

¹² According to participants, RE population living in mixed community experience no intolerance or any other racial/ethnic discrimination. Furthermore, they confirmed they would indeed prefer living in an ethnically- mixed settlement: “Normally. That way our kids would fit better into society and would no longer go out to beg.”

this nothing more than an excuse for not attending, as there are many children from general population who travel from farther than people living in Riverside and Talum. During the interview with facilitator she offered her opinion:

” *They are afraid because other kids are bullying them on their way to the school. No one would tell you that out loud, but that happens.*”

Hence, according to the opinion of the facilitator, additional mediator for elementary schools and transportation school attendance would be significantly improved which would **foster socialization**¹³. With regards to socialization, a Roma participant summarized his school experience in following way:

” *I had a will to proceed with education, to become someone...but it did not work out. Because...if a friend of mine did something, he would put a blame on me, and I had no one to defend me.*”

Based on our interviews, similar experiences appear to be important reason why many members of RE population give up education, across Montenegro¹⁴.

Yet, a common conclusion of all stakeholders we talked to was that, given the living conditions, it is unreasonable to expect equal performance in the classroom from RE children. Social worker at Berane municipality phrased in a following way:

” *I think we got it all wrong, [in Montenegro] we insist on enrollment in education instead of first working with parents on solving housing issue. I've been to those barracks many times; it is not pleasant to enter rooms where sometimes 20 people live...*”

Although many RE parents are recognized as someone who often care about children education more than parents within majoritarian population¹⁵, there are apparently many examples where parents enroll children for the sole purpose of receiving social welfare. While authorities believe that fear from taking away welfare positively affect RE community, facilitator beliefs institutions cannot (or will not) really do much. She summarized it in following way:

” *Those are just empty treats. They [Center for Social Work] cannot take away anything from them. They could start a procedure which refers to neglect of children, because elementary school is mandatory, but they don't.*”

Housing

Same as in other municipalities where RE population is divided between domicile and displaced persons, there are stark differences with regards to housing. Overall, as reported by the represen-

13 Transportation vans have been secured through the project and are ready to be employed. However, the position of driver has not been systematized by the local government yet, despite the fact that Ministry of Education is ready to finance transport starting from September 2019. Thus, even when financial support was provided, institutional passivity put RE population in inadequate situation. During interviews, Roma population has expressed their desire for driver to be a member of RE community.

14 We also find gender effect in drop-out, similar to the one in majority of other municipalities. Participant from Roma NGO said that culture of early marriages, together with financial benefits coming from it, is what puts pressure on female children to leave school mostly frequently around 6th -7th grade.

15 According to representative of Roma NGO about 70% of RE children regularly attend elementary school. It has been also reported by some parents in the focus groups that their kids also attend extra-curricular activities, such as workshops.

tative of the municipality, about 30% of RE population in Berane lives in legalized housing units¹⁶, mostly barracks (slums). The size of these barracks varies between 30 and 50 square meters. While there were no specialized projects in last 3 years that tackled issues of Roma housing in Berane¹⁷, part of Riverside settlement was renewed years ago, when 6 small houses were built through HELP project and financial support of the EU and UNHCR. Yet, this attempt was only partially successful. While settlement was fully legalized¹⁸ and connected to utility network, **the location was suboptimal**, to say the least. Facilitator for Berane municipality explained it in a following way:

” *That was the only location municipality offered, otherwise they would build anywhere else. (...) However, with the first major flood, large portion of land was not only “pulled” into the river but flooded from the bottom. (...) This was never fixed and returned to the original state.*”

We talked to few people who live there, who painted the full picture for us:

” *We live in bad conditions. When it was new, it was all good [in HELP houses]. But it was built in the water. Until a physical barrier is created to separate us from the river, it will constantly float. When it floods, then rats appear. The water comes to our houses. (...) Some of the houses have rotten foundations.*”

Reportedly, frequent floods also indirectly affect quality of life of RE community. For instance, municipality had to eliminate public lighting because of floods, for safety reason. When asked what is the basic thing that can be done for them to improve their living conditions, participants asked for:

” *Lights. There are no lights in our houses. My household has no electricity for 4 years. We have debts, only interest rate on our debt is around 25 euros.*”

Despite the fact that, in theory, Roma living in Berane, for the most part, have access to electricity, many of them are actually heating their households using wood, as they cannot keep up with utility bills.

Employment

The narratives regarding employment, outside of the fact that it is an issue, do not really match between stakeholders. Representatives of the municipality appear to believe that there is a **lack of motivation** and work ethic among RE population:

” *Last year we wanted to employ one person in Public Waste Disposal company, in Riverside settlement. We offered it to two persons who refused ‘right of the bat’. When we asked why, they said ‘if I get a job, I will lose social welfare’.*”

¹⁶ Reportedly, legal status of the housing units is equally problematic between both settlements.

¹⁷ Previously there were projects which targeted displaced persons, such as **Regional Housing Projects**, where 3 out of 94 apartments were given to the Roma families. In focus groups with RE population, they reported believing they were discriminated as even general population got apartments before Roma people did.

¹⁸ In another interview inhabitants reported that land is actually not owned by the municipality, but that they are currently in legal dispute with a person claiming it is his private land they are occupying.

Similar opinion as offered by one member of community who works with organization that deals with rights of RE population, although he puts **responsibility on the authorities**:

” I would turn this issue to the institutions. We need to deal with a large number of recipients of social welfare in Berane. When they receive this social assistance, and someone offers a job, they will not take it, nor will they send their children to school. Institutions need to start threatening Roma, to make this population more educated.”

On the other hand, other members of RE community and facilitator claim that state does not offer any support, outside of social welfare. Employment system, according to them does not allow nonqualified individuals to effectively earn more than what you get from welfare. Facilitator explained it in simple terms:

” He can be cracking woods for two days and ear 50 euros. That means he earned the same money and he was able to spend rest of the days with his family.”

Same goes for **seasonal** work. As one Roma explained:

” They offered me to work during the season at one shop. I did not want to work for only two months. I can earn more working on my own for the same period of time.”

Roma community used the same cost-benefit argument to explain why they don't want to go to the coastal area during the summer. Simply, they are being offered money which they can barely live off, while they have to leave their families and households for long periods of time.

When they work, they mostly do informal and **heavy physical work**, often regardless of the level of education. As one participant told us:

” His brother graduated from high school. He was employed in one [auto] service here. He did not even have insurance, he worked informally. In addition, his employer had benefits from the state for employing Roma. He benefited from it, and the worker had nothing.”

The main problem here lies in lack of education and qualifications. Related issues appear to be the fact that many vocational trainings are designed for citizens, meaning that RE without papers cannot technically enroll into training that would potentially improve their chances at labor market¹⁹.

With regards to the issue of **begging**, representatives of municipality pointed out that Berane is the first local government which started sanctioning parents for not sending children to school. Yet, they also claim that there is no single case of domicile RE begging on the street, while there are 4 women who send their 5-6 kids to beg in front of the supermarket. They are all from Riverside and attend Radomir Mitrović elementary school (which has no mediator)²⁰. Roma parti-

19 One of the displaced persons we talked to, explained his struggle with documentation: “When we first came, they gave us tickets for foreigners, and they said that after 5 years we could apply for citizenship. We have tried 100 times, changed over 10 ID cards, but they do not give us citizenship. I grew up here. I was a year old when I came. They just give us some false hopes.”

20 Nonetheless, later on during the focus group, when asked to compare situation between two settlements they agreed there are not much

participants themselves recognized this to be a big issue, but they claim begging is not reserved only for displaced persons. Still, they stated that **organized begging**, where kids are being exploited while elders “sit at home” are much less frequent. While they see some improvements in that area, a lot more needs to be done to make sure “children are in classrooms, not on the streets.” While this is something we observed in many other municipalities, there is one specific issue that concerns beggars from Berane. Namely, as reported in other municipalities, there are Roma from Berane who travel to other cities to beg. This was confirmed by focus group participant who provided specifics:

” I know of three locations, Bijelo Polje, Rozaje and Gusinje. I cannot be sure, but I believe one person sent his wife and children.”

Nonetheless, there is a consensus among people we talked to that working is better than begging²¹, even if latter pays of more²².

Health

Facilitator for municipality of Berane sees attitude of local administration in two different ways. On one hand, she recognizes a good will from side of municipality, almost to a fault. Reportedly, they took a “parental” and not “administrative” approach, which means they are willing to look other way, instead of punishing RE population who repeatedly fails to simply with law²³. On the other hand, she recognized existence of strong prejudices among many health workers in Berane. These prejudices proved to be very resilient, as numerous trainings they organized would not make them any less of a “pocket-racists”, as she put it. She proceeded to elaborate:

” People from the hospital have a terrible barrier, the nurses who came to the training, left after an hour and a half because they were dissatisfied with the what we are talking about and the way we are talking”.

Fortunately, this is not the only face of health system in Berane. According to the facilitator:

” People from the Health Center [Dom Zdravlja] are completely different pair of shoes (...) Their mobile team comes to the settlement. If parents do not bring children to the Center, they come to them, they are incredible! They are leaving nothing to the chance.”

Their highly practical way of working was also recognized by RE population²⁴:

” Yes, the team from Health Center visits us regularly. They just book us, they say ‘expect us, we are coming’”.

different.

21 When asked about ways to stop it, the most frequent answer we got was more law enforcement towards people who beg, but also against people who give money to beggars.

22 One participant explained procedure of applying for social welfare: “It is difficult, now they have procedures. You need a full bag of documents. For example, for two-year old children they ask a paper from Ministry of Interior, as a proof that he/she does not have a car”

23 This is something we observed in all municipalities - desire to punish those who do not do things right. Under facilitator’s view, if someone would have told grandparents of Roma people that they had to send their children to school, then we would not be in this situation. Reportedly, RE have a problem in their own community, but no one else seems to care. Police does not react or respond to begging or domestic abuse.

24 We followed up on this difference between treatment in hospitals and health centers, as it occurred in few municipalities. According to our interviewees “the intimate atmosphere” in health centers make it much more tolerant experience.

Overall, RE population in Berane is satisfied with the treatment in the Health Center, they receive medical help without major difficulties. Participants in focus groups said that children are being immunized, and they do so by arranging it with mobile teams of the Health Center. Also, according to what has been reported to us, they all have chosen and regularly visit their personal doctors. One specific health-related issue that came about in Berane concerns the effect of 1999 NATO intervention in former Yugoslavia. Namely, a member of RE community has reported those who came from Kosovo in 1999, experience *"consequences of bombing. Incidences of cancer are at much higher level."*

Bijelo Polje

Officially, number of Roma population in municipality of Bijelo Polje in 2011 was 334, while there are not registered Egyptians in this municipality. Nonetheless, facilitator expressed his opinion that the true number is not unknown at the moment. He believes official number should be taken with grain of doubt as RE population is rather mobile. Based on his estimates this number is somewhere between 200 and 230.

In December of 2018, **new (second) LAP** has been adopted. Yet, based on facilitator's opinion one cannot properly evaluate the effectiveness of the first LAP, as people responsible for monitoring were not under obligation to report the results to the RE or wider public. Two settlements Roma people in Bijelo Polje live are Strojtanica and Rakonje²⁵. Bijelo Polje is almost exclusively inhabited by the domicile Roma population. This is the reason why their situation, compared to the rest of the northern municipalities, is somewhat better. Facilitator expressed this difference in following way:

” They have been living there for many years and are concentrated in two settlements, they have built solid buildings to live in, several of them live in excellent houses...in excellent living conditions, with excellent incomes. What is commendable, they are very calm, and they cause no problems to the general community”.

Education

Based on facilitator's opinion, the awareness of importance of education among RE population has significantly improved as a result of generational change. Currently, in municipality of Bijelo Polje between 20 and 25 RE children attend elementary school, 3 high school, and 8 of them are currently studying part-time (“vanredno”). Based on information provided by the facilitator there are two mediators for high school²⁶. Unlike in the case of Berane, for instance, none of the assistants in area of education are members of RE population²⁷.

RE population receives help from both municipality and Ministry of Education in form of **free books** and other school supplies, at the beginning of year. In Strojtanica settlement transport to school is also being covered. Facilitator cites lack of awareness of education as the reason why issue of less frequent school attendance, due to transportation obstacles, is not being resolved in Rakonje settlement:

” In that very moment, it is more important to them to have 10 or 15 euros, than to provide education to their children. This is the difference between Strojtanica and Rakonje, they are different in every possible way, intellectually and experience-wise.”

25 Facilitator believes that one of the main problems is discord between the two settlements and “greed of individuals”, who benefit from disagreement and rivalry between two communities. However, as an opposite example of how communities can get along, he offered an episode that occurred during the Roma Day: “It is the first time that in the north of Montenegro celebration of this day was organized in Roma community. They brought queues, horses, the municipality worked hard on all the details, but most of these activities were carried out by the local community. (...) They spend a wonderful day, all and together. On the other side you have [name of Roma representative] who worked diligently to destroy all of that.”

26 There is also an assistant in classroom, who is employed through project.

27 Facilitator expressed his opinion that it would be better to employ RE assistants. Yet, this is not an option of Bijelo Polje as there are only two people who graduated from high school. One of them does not want to proceed in this direction with carrier while the other prefers working as teaching assistant.

Accordingly, **drop-out rate** is significantly higher in Rakonje settlement, while the only such cases in Strojtanica are related to migration²⁸. Facilitator (freely) estimated that drop-out rate in Strojtanica is likely to be around 20%, while he believes in Rakonje is closer to 80%. Nevertheless, facilitator believes that besides culture, one of the main obstacles are living conditions:

” *It's not enough for his child just to go to school. Kids are very sensitive to having a wardrobe and everything else. When child goes to school, will they [other children] include him in the community if he/she spends whole break in a corner watching other kids have sandwiches, phones...”*

Teaching assistant in elementary school, however, witnessed to change of attitudes of people towards part of the Roma community:

” *The children accepted the Roma children, they hang out together, they accepted each other. (...) They fit in, I'm talking about the Roma children in the Strojtanica settlement, (...) the attitude of the teaching staff and the school management was even more favorable to them than to the other children.”*

The increasingly favorable treatment of school administration was confirmed by the facilitator.

He believes parents do not make a distinction between girls and boys, with regards to education. Under his view, **arranged marriages** are, for the most part, a relic of past²⁹. As the most efficient tool for lowering down drop-out rate, facilitator sees tackling issue of employment status of parents and improving housing conditions. What else can be done? Roma community expressed **desire to have a space** where they can educate each other, help each other with the homework or extracurricular classes. Such space would also, under their view, they would be able to learn about their culture and identity. That this is indeed needed can be witnessed by facilitator account:

” *In the northern Montenegro, including Bijelo Polje, we don't have any record in the libraries of Roma in this territory, as if they had never existed”*

Another important issue concerns language, as many RE parents used to talk only Roma language in their households, which had impact in their performance at school³⁰. As discussed in other municipalities, one way to efficiently deal with this issue would be to start at the pre-school level. However, facilitator reported reluctance of the kindergarten's administration to “open doors” to RE children³¹.

Housing

The most serious housing-related issue for RE in Bijelo Polje has to do with the plan of displacing a part of the community in the village of Rakonje. As a result, municipality plans on building ad-

28 When asked what the reason behind stratification of two settlements is, facilitator explained:“(...) those from Strojtanica have more experience of going abroad and there they really advanced, made some money, picked up these positive habits from abroad. When they came there, they were aware that there was a better world. They were involved [in host countries] in school programs and other activities, so they were fairly educated and aware.”

29 He also reported one case of arranged marriages between minors, which has been reported by the other members of community. Interestingly, facilitator pointed out the soon there may be an issue of too few people marrying. In many ways, arranged marriages were vehicle for meeting potential RE spouses who are not blood-related.

30 Facilitator reported many kids who came back from abroad still communicating between themselves in German.

31 Reportedly, despite expressed interest of RE parents to send their children to kindergarten (if transportation is covered), kindergarten's director claims that RE population would not send their children.

ditional housing units in Strojtanica settlement and relocate RE living in Rakonje. The problem, however, according to facilitator, lies in the fact that neither of two communities are fans of such solution. While it can be expected that municipality will be forced to impose this solution, based on facilitators opinion, a “a big altercation is possible”, which can be avoided if local government puts effort into informing entire Roma community instead of going solely true their “elected” representative³². Why RE population does not like the idea of merging two settlements into one, which would likely make it easier for local administration to address problems of RE population? Facilitator believes it is their different worldview that drives this reluctance to share living space³³.

Second most important issue is **legal status of housing units**:

” *I think they are all illegal. I doubt any of them are legal because those are ‘wild (informal) settlements’. Rakonje since forever, Strojtanica since 1970s, (...) when municipality gave it [land] to them and they started building from solid materials”, explained facilitator.*

In addition to this there are certain concerns for the **safety** of Rakonje inhabitants due to regional roads³⁴ passing through their settlement:

” *They have a regional highway (‘magistralni put’) passing almost through their houses, and not only a settlement. This is dangerous, many children were killed in traffic because the crossing of the highway at this place is very dangerous”.*

A member of Roma community confirmed this:

” *They [cars] are passing by 80-90km/h. They should have put road bumps (‘ležeći policajci’) long time ago.”*

Current **procedure for legalization** is overly complex for traditionally non-informed RE with no financial power to pursue them. Furthermore, based on facilitators opinion, barely few (around 5%) of housing units would even qualify for legalization. With regards to the utilities, both settlements are **connected the local network** and, thus, have access to water, electricity and sewage. However, they experience trouble with paying their bills. Most of them do it by signing a long-term paying contract which allow them to pay in multiple installments while keeping the access. Waste disposal, on the other hand, represents an issue as RE population in Strojtanica has no access to disposal container so they are forced to leave thresh in front of their homes:

” *We have one bucket (‘kanta’). We take brooms and collect it and when truck comes to clean, they take half and they let another half go. During summer we sit outside more than in the inside, (...) it stinks so much that you cannot eat or drink.”*

32 All the communication in the Bijelo Polje municipality between the Roma community and local self-government is reduced to one person. As facilitator proceeded:“(…) He is a self-proclaimed representative of the Roma community (...). I think he is spreading misinformation so that this community would not unify. Because, in the fifteen years of my activism, I think there are many benefits that he enjoys as a representative of the Roma community.”

33 Although it would potentially lead to less integration, facilitator thinks this would actually be a good solution for Roma community.

34 According to our interviewees, only main roads in both settlements are covered in asphalt, while all the secondary roads are unmarked, dusty and susceptible to landslide during the rainy season.

Employment

Young RE people in Bijelo Polje are, reportedly, interested in any kind of work. They mostly look through Bureau of Employment as there are no **assistants** in employment. Yet, many of the workshops, vocational training and similar activities they attend do not result in employment. Instead, what is being offered, for the most part, is either **hard physical work or seasonal job** which rarely pays enough to warrant leaving home and moving to another municipality for months. One member of RE community explained his experience with employers:

” *On the plantations, they say 420 euros is the salary, you work from 7 to 3 and you have one meal. No problem, we got on the train and went there. First, they say one row 55 meters to work for the euro and 38 cents. Second, you’re not sleeping. Third, they give you to eat what they usually throw away.”*

According to facilitator only three RE persons hold public job in municipality of Bijelo Polje. Despite being very skilled and fast learners, especially in manual skills, both public and private companies are still rather **hesitant to employ members of RE community**. One woman shared her story:

” *They looked for two people [for planting flowers], no experience or degree needed, and I told job councilor I would like to apply. (...) He said ‘No, no. That is not for you, that’s another project. When I asked to give me the number so that I can inform myself, he did not give me an answer.”*

As in other municipalities where domicile RE population lives, participants reported **begging** as not being a serious issue. When it happens, it is **organized by RE population from other northern municipalities**, most notably Berane. Facilitator described how he concluded it is indeed the case of organized begging:

” *(...) when I bought her [a female beggar] an ice-cream another girl ran to her, slapped her, and told her she is not allowed to do that”³⁵*

For the most part, he claims, RE in Bijelo Polje are not in such a desperate situation to not have any means for survival. Thus, they prefer working over begging, and usually seek to train themselves to be good mechanics or ceramics specialists. Nonetheless, during focus group with members of the community participant disagreed:

” *If I could, I would remove all of them [beggars]. In Strojtnica there is no begging. (...) [In other settlements?] Every other house goes to beg”*

Large part of community lives of a social welfare, support programs, informal physical work, or by collecting secondary waste. Those who fulfill requirements receive social welfare³⁶, for the most part, but there are those who need it very much but do not receive any of it.

³⁵ The one example of Roma from Bijelo Polje who beg, facilitator mentioned a family where mother of five came from Kosovo and is one of the few people in the municipality who has not resolved legal status.

³⁶ For a family with three under-aged children who go to school social welfare amounts to 220 euros (with child allowance)

Health

RE population in Bijelo Polje have chosen their **doctors and gynecologists**, but they are not aware of it for the most part, according to the facilitator. Based on our data, children in Bijelo Polje are also being regularly immunized. However, one participant of the focus group reported not having chosen doctor because they are all booked up and continue to pass him over to another. During focus group with female participants, they rarely knew what gynecologists means, and more frequently referred to them as “doctors for women”. As in many other municipalities, they visit them only when they have to, maintaining low level of **preventive care**:

” *No, we don't care too much for health. We go only when we are pregnant, just before giving birth when I cannot handle the pain anymore. (...) Otherwise we don't go, we drink teas or pills we can find*”.

Based on facilitators opinion, a local government can help by increasing efforts towards improving **awareness about reproductive health**, hygiene and preventive care within the community. However, in contrast to his point, previous similar activities went unnoticed. For instance, when free screening were organized, in Health Center have reported that Roma women participated. Yet, they themselves stated during focus group that they did not take part in it. Similarly, campaigns of „healthy styles of living“ can hardly find their way to the RE population as it is, as facilitator put it, „disussing to talk about healtyh lifestyles with someone who often collects food from other people's trash“.

Although, in general, they have good words for health workers in Health Center, many of them shared with us situation in which they felt like they are being treated discriminatory. There is no way for us to check to what extent similar situations happen to general population, but indeed these examples appear to be straightforward cases of neglect:

” *My father was on dialysis treatment, his back pain was catastrophic so he asked for something [painkiller] (...), but doctor told him directly 'Banjo, the time has come for you to die'*”.

Herceg Novi

Local action plan (LAP) for municipality of Herceg Novi is currently being developed and it is expected to be adopted by the end of September 2019³⁷. Officially, based on the census data there are 258 Roma and 28 Egyptians living in Herceg Novi. To the best of their knowledge, our interviewees believe that this number accurately describes situation today. RE population living in this municipality is 90-95% domicile. With regards to their status, according to the facilitator and local NGO dealing with RE right, situation is only “partially” satisfactory. On one hand, due to the fact that RE population in Herceg Novi is spread out, they are much more **integrated** than RE population in other municipalities. Yet there are places where RE population face serious issues and where significant improvements are required. With this in mind, our interviewees shared their conviction that comparing situation of Roma between municipalities is not beneficial. Instead, they would rather discuss the position of Roma population **in comparison to general population** within the municipality. Only then, they argued, we can get a proper picture and escape fallacy of believing situation Herceg Novi is fully satisfactory.

Education

Each group of individuals we talked to agree that RE population in Herceg Novi understands the **value of education**³⁸. As one Roma father put it:

” *There is not progress without education, and we should not give up.*”

Still, local Roma and Egyptian population experiences very much the same obstacles as in other parts of Montenegro - lack of material resources and inappropriate housing conditions which have crippling effect on children’s motivation to continue education. One mother summarized it in following way:

” *My kids don’t always have shoes to wear, so I cannot send them without basic stuff.*”

The major difference appears to be the fact that most Roma in Herceg Novi drop out from secondary school, while they almost without an exception graduate from elementary school³⁹. Member of Roma community explained the change that occurred in recent years:

” *You know, it is 21st century, and now we have no serious issues of that kind [children not going to school]. Going back 5 or 10 years maybe there was, but I believe that’s not happening among Roma anymore.*”

As in other municipalities, interviewees agreed that **gender differences** with regards to drop-out are common. One Roma parent explained this is a matter of resilience and not culture:

” *There is a difference. Boys are more aggressive so they are not touched by many things, while girls are more sensitive, so once they make a mistake they fall back.*”

37 CAG for municipality of Herceg Novi is also in its inception stage.

38 Nonetheless, based on our data, there are differences between settlements, with Donji Drenovik being a somewhat more problematic due to lesser integration and lower education level of RE parents.

39 The only reported elementary school drop-out examples were migration-driven. According to the interviewees children who leave continue with their education in the host country. Based on their evaluation drop-out due to migration is significantly lower in Herceg Novi compared to other municipalities in Montenegro.

There is one assistant in social inclusion for the area of education who covers four schools, with total of 70 RE children. The work of the **assistant** seems to be acknowledged by the community. Numerous mothers outed:

” *She is great, she tells us how our kids should go to school“; „Yes, know her. She brings clothes and books for kids.“*

Unlike in other municipalities, facilitator and local NGO reported that mediator’s principal goals change according the school and number of children attending. Namely, in school where large number of RE children is attending the focus is obviously on regularity of the school attendance. However, where the school has less RE children (below 15) who attend regularly, then focus immediately switches to **quality of education** and improving performance. Yet, they believe the single most important variable is parents’ support in the early stages of education, as well as the additional external help in the later grades, in form of extracurricular classes, access to computers, workshop on education awareness etc., as „their parents are incapable of helping them at that level.“

With regards to the treatment in the classroom. None of the stakeholders we talked to believe widespread **prejudice** is something that marks experience of RE children. Roma participant, father of four children, described their everyday experience in the following way:

” *I am not sure if it is specific to my children, but they have been accepted by surroundings without any differences. Me and my family haven’t had any problems with anyone, believe me...and out of 100% I have only 0,001% of contact with Roma, and rest with other population: Serbs, Montenegrins, Bosniaks...“*

Although causality is not straightforward, it appears that this is the product of better integration and lack of language barrier. The vast majority on RE population in Herceg Novi speak Montenegrin language, which they increasingly use in house⁴⁰.

Housing

Housing is not an area where RE population in Herceg Novi can be qualitatively separated from their counterparts in other municipalities. By all accounts housing appears to be, by far, the most serious issue for Roma and Egyptian population. Houses in Meljine settlement are not properly water-isolated, while in Drenovik they are built of fire-prone materials, with frequent sewage system spills, poor road infrastructure and public lighting. As some of them described it:

” *That’s [housing] a serious problem. Currently, a lot of us lives in barracks which were built in 1968.“; another participant proceeded: “Conditions were terrible, so we got a chance to buy apartments on a 25-year loan. Anyways, they tricked us, we are paying 185.000 euros for that apartment...but that is for my kids, so that they don’t live the way I did, and work jobs I had to work “.*

⁴⁰ Approximately 20% of Roma and Egyptian children have somewhat harder time fully understanding lectures on Montenegrin language, or have underdeveloped vocabulary. Reportedly, some of them still frequently use Roma language at home for the sake of preserving cultural identity.

Legal status of housing units also seems to be a major problem in Meljine where approximately 50 Roma lives in an informal settlement where further constructions are not permitted. Further, a large category of Roma (approx. 80%) who have their own houses are not legalized, nor they have permits for building. Although many of them work for public companies such as Public Waste Disposal company, they did not manage to solve housing issue through employers. Same is other municipalities, they do not mind living together with other ethnicities, and to the extent this is the case today, they get along pretty well. While this may be a general rule, one of the participant reported he feels insulted as they are often „being called Gypsies“despite the fact that they are clean and meticulous, „far from being Gypsies.“

Employment

Unemployment rate of Roma and Egyptian population in Herceg Novi is lower than in majority of other municipalities, perhaps with exception of Tivat. For the most part they look for the jobs themselves, and they mostly find work in Public Waste Disposal company, hotels (e.g. maids), small-scale shops (e.g. jewelry). Roma themselves seem to believe that labor market is much more diverse than it used to be, mostly due to increased level of education among them:

” Our fathers and uncles had nowhere else to work but in Public Waste Disposal or Sewage Management, due to lack of education, but today is different, our boys can choose“.

Extremely effective initiative was established three years ago in creation of **syndicate organization** that actively works on the labor rights of RE population. This is the unique practice in Montenegro, which could potentially translate in other municipalities at the great benefit of RE population. Representative of an local NGO explained efficiency of such collective organizing in following way:

” When we started working on it, there was more than 100.000 euros in debts towards Roma workers. Three months afterwards, the whole amount of debt was settled. For the first time we had Roma people in the managing bodies of the syndicate. “

Facilitator reported that inadequate treatment at the workplace are isolated cases that stand away from typically **non-discriminatory treatment**. Seemingly, discriminatory practices used to happen sometime before in Public Waste Disposal company, but with new management and dialogue with syndicate, these issues were successfully resolved. This was confirmed by community members we talked to:

” I work for Public Waste Disposal for 16 years now, and as far as I am concerned we did not have any problems“, said one of the employees⁴¹.

Interestingly, another participant in focus group had significantly different experience:

” I also worked for Public Waste Disposal, and I believe I was always discriminated. I had necessary qualifications, but they never gave me a chance.“

41 Issue of RE without papers working based on short-term contract, from 6-12 months, was reported as an obstacle.

For those who do not have a job, lack of information represents an obstacle, as there are no assistants in area of employment. According to the facilitator, they are mostly aware of what it takes to sign-up for a job at Bureau, and knowledgeable with respect to under which conditions they may be removed from the list of unemployed persons. One, currently unemployed, Roma put it this way:

” *At the moment, I dont have a job, but I should start working in 11 days from now. Who cannot find job here, he does not want to work*”, implying to obvious difference between Herceg Novi and northern municipalities, for instance.

However, we did not necessarily observe the same relationship with specifically Bureau of Labor:

” *They call us to ask whether we want to work for 190 euros. I will never work for that amount* “.

Another person in the group begged to differ: *“I was working for 180 euros in the kitchen. It is better to work, for yourself, even for that money. You are out for longer period of time and you get to know people* “.

Based on information provided by interviewees, only 3-4 families currently receive **social welfare**. In the same time, it has been reported that 99% of the RE population in Herceg Novi have **documents** as they are domicile citizens. Major problem in acquiring papers for those who don't have them, in addition to complex documentation needed, is requirement that person has secured accommodation/housing.

Begging is becoming less and less prominent issue in Herceg Novi. As far as local community is concerned, only handful of individuals engage in such behavior for a limited period of time (e.g. Market Day). Organized begging in Herceg Novi, based on our data, is reserved for nomad Roma (*“cergari”*) population, from other municipalities or even countries. Many of our interviewees agree that part of the problem that is rooted in legislative solutions currently employed. Namely, representative of NGO working on Roma right argued that the best way to stop such behavior would be to **punish general population** that give money to beggars. Instead, people willing to help RE population should be incentivized to channel those resources in different direction, such as providing food, clothes, shoes, book etc. On the other hand, opinion of members of Roma community was that one should start with parenting, as *„everything goes from home: „Begging is easier, but working is better. It pays of better.* “

Health

Situation in the area of health seems satisfactory. According to the health worker, who is also part of the working group for LAP, all RE individuals own health cards which means that under current law they cannot be denied health assistance, regardless of whether they have citizenship or not. Children are regularly **immunized**, and women have chosen their gynecologists, who they visit frequently. One way in which situation can be improved would be employing assistants who would mediate relationship between health system and patients, especially elderly:

” *They could keep track of documentation, bring prescriptions and medicine to old people, or even act preventively.* “

Nikšić

There are not recent data on how many RE population currently lives in municipality of Nikšić. Based on data in 2011, this municipality holds the second largest RE population in Montenegro (929). The RE population is almost evenly split between Roma (483) and Egyptians (446). RE population in Nikšić predominantly lives in three settlements: Budo Tomović, pod Trebjesom and Brlja. Local Action Plan (LAP) for municipality of Nikšić was adopted for period December 2018 to 2022, however, facilitator informed us that “they are not in a position to prepare new LAP”⁴².

Education

During our interviews in Nikšić, we were also able to confirm that awareness of important of education is increasing over time. All female participants we talked to confirm their plans to enroll all of their children in elementary schools, as a result of their belief that “*without education there is no progress*”. According to the data from Ministry of Education, 237 RE children attends elementary school, while 25 of them attend high school⁴³. One specific thing to educational system in Nikšić is the fact that there are two elementary schools - “Mileva Lajović Lalatović” in Rubeža and “Radoje Čizmović” in Ozrinići – with license for **workers’ or evening schools/education**. Here, older RE population can graduate with two grades inside one year, and secure minimal requirement for job application at Bureau.

Currently there are three **assistants** for social inclusion in area of education employed in Nikšić, two in Mileva Lajović Lalatović elementary school (with 169 RE children) and one in Milija Nikčević elementary school. Parents expressed their satisfaction with mediator’s performance:

For our population that is very important (...). It is much easier if that person transfers information to the teacher or institution, (...) because they know their rights only when a mediator [assistant] is there.”⁴⁴

Members of RE population reported school administration and teachers are very diligent with regards to school attendance among RE. One female participant stated that in last two years no female student dropped-out. Along those lines, general impression of people we talked to is that drop-out is becoming a less of a problem, as status of RE population improved (although they recognized there are still many of families who struggle to provide resources needed for education). Facilitator beliefs that best way to stop drop-out is **early integration**. The current situation in this regard is not satisfactory, as only 5 to 6 RE children attends kindergarten⁴⁵. Improvement on this level would help immensely with language barrier that part of RE population has. From municipality they pointed out an example of good practice they introduced in one elementary school – **a rulebook on preventing drop-out**, where besides parents, teachers, assistants, and school administration, representatives of Center for Social Work and Police Department are involved.

42 As reason for this she named lack of will to face mistakes made in the process of creation of the first LAP, poor budget planning and complex procedures that require human and time resources.

43 Reportedly, distribution of RE children that regularly attend school is equal across settlements. With respect to gender differences, early and arrange marriages are still part of cultural differences, but things are changing. In contrast to general population, they don’t see giving money for a bride as a problem, as money is used for children and wedding. In terms of age limit, they expressed belief that everything below 16 is too early.

44 Interestingly, while they find “mediators” necessary in the elementary school, they are less sure about their necessity at the level of high school. Some consider that those who go to high school are already capable of taking care of themselves. In addition, they believe that the role of the mediator should be expanded by talking to students about the professions they would like to pursue in the future.

45 LAP cites 34 children either going to or being prepared for kindergarten. All the female participants reported teaching their children Montenegrin language from youngest age. Still, they want to preserve their own language and identity, which forgetting Roma worries them.

Yet, the main issue remains stagnant – quality of education. As facilitator witnessed:

” *It happens that children between the 6th and 9th grade of primary school write in block letters, mix voices and are not at the level required for the grade they attend”.*

Facilitator believes, this can be tackled by employing **teaching assistants** who could help children in studying process, in addition to assistants in social inclusion who are focused on mere attendance. Such solution has support among RE community too:

” *It would be good if mediators could take one extra hour, to dedicate it to teaching children the most important subjects/course, such as mathematics, Montenegrin language, etc”.*

Another crucial issue in Nikšić appears to be a problem of **transportation** to school, which is why children are forced to use insecure roads without public lighting and frequently populated with stray dogs. Namely, same as in case of Berane, a van dedicated for this purpose has been acquired, however, the position for driver has not been systematized yet. As far as provision of school supplies is concerned, books are provided through the Ministry, while clothing and footwear they need to provide for themselves⁴⁶. According to the claims of RE population, they don't receive help from the Municipality of Nikšić. This has been confirmed by representatives of working group for LAP, who claimed local government does not finance any project related to education of RE population.

With regards to school-related personal experiences, participants in focus groups reported being both the most with the fact they stand out from other children in school, as they look different and they don't have adequate clothing and footwear. One female participants reported other parents complaining to school administration:

” *Some parents complained to the principal that their children had to go to school with mine. We had to come and talk to the teacher, and have other parent come to tell him that my child has rights too”.*

Housing

As previously mentioned, the largest portion of RE population in Nikšić inhabits **settlements** of Budo Tomović, pod Trebjesom and Brlja. According to the facilitator, RE population in Nikšić lives in poor conditions. Although some of them built housing units from solid materials, they mostly in barracks with small rooms and without public lighting. Out of three settlements, facilitator evaluated that situation is worst in Brlja settlement⁴⁷. In words of member of RE community:

” *It's hard when a mother does not know that to do, when she goes through the trash cans or begging. She has not access to already dirty street. (...) First of all, there is not water supply, sewage, lighting, pedestrian*

⁴⁶ Facilitator reported cases of teacher organizing collection of clothes and shoes for RE kids who are in immediate need of it.

⁴⁷ Regarding the general situation in the Roma settlements, the members of the working group say that the situation is the same in each settlement. According to them, the road to one of them is asphalted and not to two others. Gračanica and Humci are asphalted, and there is no lighting in Gračanica. In Brlja, lighting has been restored.

crossing. (...) They drive so fast; every child is in danger. Check the police report for how many street accidents happened."

Based on data from municipality of Nikšić, they, in cooperation with international organizations, housing issue for 140 persons was resolved in 2015 and 2017, when 20 housing units were built in two waves. During implementation of RSP program for displaced persons, out of 62 housing units RE families received 16. Related to this, participants in both focus groups reported alleged intolerance between domicile and displaced members of RE community, as a result of distinct housing conditions. Namely, according to these accounts, domicile Roma community reacted to the fact that displaced Roma persons received apartments in buildings from solid materials. As one of them put it:

” Displaced persons were given the advantage to get three-room apartments with elevators. And us, domiciles, who have spent their lives in Nikšić, cleaning up the streets...they take better care of displaced persons.”

With regards to social housing, criteria for allocation of apartments was size of the household, and number of children attending school. Advantage was given to families where one family member is employed, for purpose of making sure they will be able to pay **utilities**. The latter seems to be a big problem in municipality of Nikšić, where RE population is usually not capable of paying utilities without external help. One of the participants even reported “stealing electricity”:

” I don't feel like working anymore, (...) as if I am uneducated, no one will hire me. I don't have anything, so to spend on electricity...I literally steal electricity. So that you know if it kills me (laughter)”

Legal status, as in other municipalities represent a major problem. Housing units are **illegal** and usually located on state or municipal land, with no connection to electricity network. In terms of infrastructure, they think it is poorly designed: roads are impassable, public lighting often non-existent, with lots of dust, barracks which are leaking as soon as it rains. One member of RE population described conditions in following way:

” Five of them live in 45-square-foot shack and we expect them to go to school regularly? To go to the doctor and clean regularly? They do not have a sewer...”

Employment

Based on focus groups with members of RE community, they appear to be rather uninformed about way in which they can exercise their labor rights, despite the fact that they admittedly fulfill criteria needed to get employed. They think that introducing **assistants** in area of employment would help tremendously with communication between community and Bureau. However, according to our data, assistants for social inclusion in area of employment already exist in Nikšić. Namely, they are employed through the HELP project in Podgorica and Nikšić. According to the plan, they work two days a week in Podgorica and once a week in Nikšić. Nonetheless, in both cities we talked with at least few members of RE community who were not aware of their existence.

Along the same lines, representative of municipality told us that based on their data only 34 out of 900 Roma are active on Bureau, meaning they are actively report to their job counselor⁴⁸. Although they pass certain trainings, this rarely for them leads to a steady employment⁴⁹. Member of working group for LAP, however, recognizes **intertie** from RE population at least as part of a problem:

” Bureau has been implementing the retraining program for 20 years, for which one-person training costs the Bureau between € 700 and € 900. However, in order to go through this program, it is necessary for a person to have completed primary school. For RE population, it appears that is often more cost-effective to receive social welfare than helping them to get employment”.

One reason for such intertie may lie in **discrimination** RE population experiences in the process of employment. Indeed, during focus group they argued being demotivated by prejudiced behavior:

” We [RE population] know that discrimination is waiting for us whenever we are employed. We will hardly find job because we are Roma, so we don't have enough will”.

On the other hand, Municipality of Nikšić in last 10 to 15 years did not conduct any campaigns on topic of RE employment, and they agree with the assertion that full-time assistants would be extremely helpful. Female participants we talked to, with exception of one employed person with three grades of high school, are unqualified workers whose potential salary at available jobs would not surpass social welfare check. When they do work, they mostly do in private sector, but only for a short period of time and informally. Reportedly, the only public job RE population in Nikšić is capable of maintaining is in Public Waste Disposal company. Some of the participants reported that they do not want to work jobs which are being offered by the Bureau:

” They always called me for some dirty work...physical or communal. They never called me for the other stuff [computers]”.

Others, however, recognize that they lack qualifications for certain jobs:

” But you cannot, it depends on education. You cannot work as a minister, with just an elementary school”.

On the issue of **begging**, while all stakeholders recognize the scale and importance of the problem, they do not agree on solutions. Everyone is aware that such behavior is rooted in poor financial condition among RE population, as well as in unresolved legal status of displaced RE persons. On the one hand, some participants suggested sanctions towards parents or losing custody over kids. Yet, some participants voiced their concerns with such a solution:

” That's not a solution. The child we be left on the street, and they will go to prison. They won't have money to pay, so they will have to give away his daughter for money”.

48 Members of a working group told us that the reason for this also lies in the fact that for as long as one is active at Bureau, he/she would not be able to receive social welfare. With respect to this, Roma activist claims that individuals who receive social welfare are under no obligation to report to Bureau every three months, which apparently confuses Roma population who misleadingly believe they are active while they are receiving social welfare.

49 They also cited positive example of Red Cross trainings that help them write a biography and explained how to conduct a job interview.

Based on facilitator opinion, issue of begging is equally problematic in all settlements. Under her view, begging in municipality of Nikšić is **not an organized** enterprise, but rather a case of parents forcing their kids (or spouses) to beg on the street.

Health

Health culture among RE in Nikšić is not at satisfactory level, facilitator stated authoritatively. According to her best knowledge, all children are being immunized regularly, and all adults have their doctors/gynecologists chosen. In many ways, however, situation in health is similar to the one in general population – some go only when something hurts them, others do so regularly. She also pointed out that **assistants** for the area of health is employed in Nikšić, through HELP project⁵⁰, and that such positions are very important as RE population is not informed about best procedures to exercise their health-related rights and act preventively. They is most focused on helping RE displaced persons in receiving health care despite lack of documents.

As additional problem RE community cite rather distant emergency ambulances. However, in contrast to them, members of working group claim that there are clinics in each settlement. In addition to this, mobile teams and pediatricians come to the settlement regularly. Municipality representatives believe that their **ability to design health-related projects is low** because it is entirely a state competence. A number of participants have mentioned **discrimination** in health institutions. The most dramatic of such cases was a violence from one employer of Health Center:

” Cousin of mine went to see a doctor, which was probably drunk. When he read his name and last name in the health record... (...) he said ‘go there and wait, don’t make me hit you [‘da te fljaštim’]’. (...) He was slapping him with no reason.”

A long health-related debate on **reproductive health** occurred within focus group with female RE population. While they admit not being sufficiently educated on this issue, they reported, in multiple occasions, cases of sexual violence from their spouse. Namely, their husbands decide on number of children⁵¹ and, thus, force women to bear them. One mother described her pregnancy:

” For the most part, I did not have will to have more than four children (...) but when his oldest son died, the same night he told me ‘here is your son’ and in 9 months I gave birth to a son. I did not ask for that, he decided alone.”

On the topic of information, large portion of RE population don’t know how to use contraception. If they, knew, argued on of our interviewees, they would not be against using “spiral”⁵².

50 Finance for this position has expired in January of 2019. Reportedly, Ministry of Health, together with Health Centers took action towards systematizing this position permanently.

51 On average, Roma family in Nikšić has 6 members.

52 In addition, the participants argued that their spouses would not have a problem with them incorporating a spiral.

Podgorica

The largest portion of RE population in Montenegro is located in Podgorica, as a result of the fact that majority displaced Roma from Kosovo in 1999 moved into the capital. According to the data gathered during census in 2011, 4673 members of the RE community were situated in Podgorica, from which only 685 are Egyptians. Roma facilitator could not provide us with more recent and accurate data, but he stated that number of displaced persons is higher than number of domicile RE. On the other hand, representatives of the municipality stated that this division is blurred and does not have strong foothold as earlier. They explain their position stating that 2nd or even 3rd generation of Roma that arrived in 1999 was born in Podgorica so it is hard to decide if someone is a member of “displaced”⁵³ or “domicile” population. The vast majority of RE population in Podgorica lives in Konik settlement (Vrela Ribnicka). There is currently no LAP for Municipality of Podgorica. Instead, there is a plan focused on all vulnerable social categories, including activities directed towards Roma⁵⁴.

Education

According to the facilitator, in recent years we witness an increasing trend in educational enrollment. Yet, he points out that the real problem is **quality of education** they are receiving. This clearly manifests in later grades of elementary school, when RE children fall behind and start dropping-out. In Podgorica there are **assistants** for social inclusion in area of education. Facilitator, however, believes their role is severely limited because they do not belong to the RE community. Based on his communication with teachers, RE children still struggle when „mediators” cannot communicate with them properly, as they do not speak Roma nor Albanian language⁵⁵. Parents share this opinion, but outside of language issues, they still evaluate the role of assistants and other services, like **transportation**, in a very positive manner. One father made a comparison with the time when he was kid:

” I believe they help RE population. I know it from my personal experience. When we used to go to school we had to wake up early so that we are not late. Now, they know that there is a van in front of the house and they know it will bring them back home.”

Poor economic condition, facilitator claims, is especially problematic in later stages of education as children are old enough to „contribute to the household budget”⁵⁶. Ministry of Labor and Social Care, as well as Ministry of Human and Minority Rights, provide books and notebooks for families in need⁵⁷. However, what drives the drop-out rate is inability to provide „normal” clothes and shoes⁵⁸, as well as money for a lunch, without which children feel hesitant to go to school. Vast majori-

53 Based on data from Ministry of Interior and UNHCR, facilitator provided us with information that approximately 300 people did not solve the ‘temporary residence’ status. He added that, in his opinion, there are no intentional obstructions in this process, but often the problem resides within poor relations between Serbia-Kosovo-Montenegro.

54 Representatives of the municipality explained that they plan to adopt new LAP till October 2019. It will be designed as previous one, i.e. it will be an integrated document focused on large number of specific vulnerable groups such as socially disadvantaged people, LGBT or RE community etc. LAP will be divided in modules specially dedicated to each of the abovementioned groups.

55 Reportedly, there are 10 trained assistants in Podgorica from RE population, but they are not employed either because they are not citizens of Montenegro or the salary (approx. 250 euros) is not something they can live on.

56 During focus group with female RE population, they reported parents influencing 14-15 year old girls not to go to school, because they may start neglecting household work.

57 Additionally, municipality provides pencil cases, pens and other items needed in school for children in need. Although this help is not strictly directed on children from RE population, officials stated that in the last year approximately 330 received that kind of help and that they dominantly belonged to RE community.

58 One of the participants mentioned that if people want to help with clothes they don’t need, they should not bring it to Red Cross, as they heard “they first open and see what is good and what is useful to them, and only then forward it to the RE population”

ty of parents we talked to reacted in following way when asked about how important education is:

” *Very much. Through education you reach the goal, and the goal is to live normally. Normal in the sense that you don't have dig in order to live*”.

Although most of the parents feel responsibility for children's education, but admittedly it is often hard for them to „send children to school when we know they will not be able to get employment”. Another reason why children leave school is due to **migration**, as they cannot properly re-enroll once they return in few years. Traditional lack of integration, where RE children do not develop close social ties with other kids also negatively affects their motivation to continue with school:

” *It happens that kids do not want to go to school, because they have nothing [clean] to wear. Other children are laughing at them and call them gypsies*”.

Facilitator corroborated these personal accounts with research data showing that the largest “ethnic distance” in general population is measured towards RE population. As in other municipalities, facilitator believes there is a gender effect here, due to arranged marriages⁵⁹.

Major problem for RE children in education is **language barrier**. Based on facilitator's testimony, at home they either speak Roma or Albanian language. He feels that more attention should be given to this population of children instead of turning a blind eye to the fact that they „sometimes don't know letters in 7th or 8th grade”. He quoted the reaction of teacher who was faced with this recommendation:

” *To pass is enough if he/she can recognize something, and that's it.*”

Similar relationship of teachers has been reported by few parents. When asked whether their children are being **discriminated**, they shared:

” *My child is not treated like others. They, pardon me...slapped my child. Not even in school, but in kindergarten*”.

Another person recalled being asked by his teacher (who he named): “Where did you come from? From India?”, and claims his child is going through similar treatment today⁶⁰.

Municipality officials stated that situation regarding education and other areas covered by this research project is better in Podgorica than other Montenegrin municipalities, due to the fact that Podgorica is administrative, educational and financial **center of the country**. They feel that RE population is increasingly aware of the importance of the education. Although they stated that “percentages are not spectacular”, the number of children attending the school is increasing year by year. Additionally, they mentioned that municipality is cooperating with Roma council on the construction of Roma cultural center – land for construction site was provided by the municipality and local authorities have paid all of the utility costs.

59 He argued that assistants and school administration have to react to this, instead of referring to it as a cultural custom of RE people as a reason for their inaction. He makes the point that 50 years ago this was normal for general population too, but institutions were set in place and law was followed, nonetheless.

60 Participants reported RE children mostly sitting in back benches, which negatively affects their ability to follow lectures.

Housing

Housing situation for RE population in Podgorica **significantly improved** with new housing unit that was built in Konik settlement⁶¹. As one participant explained the difference:

” We just recently entered into the new buildings, after 20 torturous years during which we slept in broken barracks, with water, dirt and trash all around us. For seventeen years we slept in barracks and containers in which you could not even take a breath.”

New units are, however, not owned by the RE population, but instead they signed a contract under which (based on the size) a small monthly rent has to be paid⁶², in addition to utility costs. Facilitator believes that going forward this is going to be a big problem, as families who live on welfare can hardly survive once they pay utilities and rent (in total around 100 euros estimated). Municipality representatives agree with this view, but they stated that RE community must pay more attention to space maintenance of the housing units given to them and must be aware of the obligations they have regarding **utilities payment**⁶³. There are many families living in private accommodation or barracks at Konik, who do not qualify for social housing⁶⁴. Vast majority of RE living outside of new social housing live in barracks that were built illegally. Reportedly, complex procedures of legalization, together with high costs is the main reason why only small number of families started this process⁶⁵.

Fortunately, public **transportation** is well functioning and RE community is well connected with the rest of the city. With regards to the issue of integration, some of them would prefer living outside of Konik with other ethnicities as first neighbors:

” I used to live, and it is great. Different mentality, different behavior. (...) I cannot escape what I am, but I think that other people in our surrounding should be welcomed”.

In the same time, smaller group of them prefers living in all-RE settlement. In facilitator's opinion, this has to do with the fact that even new housing units were built in a place where only RE people live, which had an isolating effect. Same as in case of Berane, there were no other locations offered, so situation resembled “take it or leave it” dilemma.

Employment

Facilitator believe that problems of employment have multiple sources, but the two major issues came about in the interview: the issue of **citizenship** and **lack of sensibility** from the side of employers. Apparently, here we can actually see the double standards society puts on RE population, when it insists on lack of education. As he explains:

61 Representative of the local authorities stated that around 170 housing units were built through Regional Housing Program and that they were given dominantly to displaced RE community from Kosovo.

62 According to the facilitator, a family living in 60 square meters apartment would have to pay between 20-25 euros.

63 Representatives mentioned the case when one of the apartments given to the RE family was converted to recycling center. Additionally, as a counter-example of proper behavior they have mentioned displaced people that arrived from Bosnia in 1991-1995 period, with whom they do not experience any problems.

64 This group decidedly left Camp 1 and Camp 2 at Konik, due to poor condition. However, the social housing project covered only those who, at that time, lived in the camps.

65 Facilitator estimated that around 100 families submitted the request for legalization, while only 40 of them proceeded with the study (elaborate) and is expected to actually complete it.

” We have a high school student, who graduated as an electrician, as the best in his class... (...) but when he was supposed to be working boss wouldn't give him major projects because he was Roma, so he didn't want him to screw something up. That's very demotivating.”

At Bureau of Employment, there are many members of RE population, including those with foreigner's status who (should) have the same rights, with exception of voting rights. However, RE population often lacks qualifications and diversity of competence. Yet many RE members claim this is not the main problem. One of them explained his experience with Bureau:

” I am not currently signed at Bureau. Last time I was in 2010/2011. I went there, they found me a job...to pack bags in [supermarket's name]. I went there and brought pictures and documents. She looked at me: 'How is your name?' – 'Ajaziz'. 'Good, give me pictures and CV, we will call you'. I never received a phone call, and I told myself they will never see me again at the Bureau.”⁶⁶

Those who work have citizens status, but they mostly work in only two public companies where general population is hesitant to go – Public Waste Disposal and Greenery (Zelenilo)⁶⁷. Many in RE population are dissatisfied with such state. One participant clarified why he does not want to be employed in these two companies:

” My father worked in Public Waste Disposal for 30 years, and I could have worked there if I wanted. But I did not want. I am not ashamed to go and dig somewhere for 2 or 5 euros. I am not ashamed of any work, but I will not work there. Why? Because my child is going to say: 'I will not educate myself, I have a place to work at...I am guaranteed job there.'”

The rest of RE population mostly survive on combination of **social welfare** and collection of secondary raw materials. The problem with private jobs is being offered to RE population lies in **short-term contracting** (3-6 months) with salary that is not significantly higher than social welfare⁶⁸. Most often, the difference does not surpass 50-80 euros, and leaves RE population wondering how to survive for the rest of the year. Similarly, it has been reported that vocational trainings at Bureau are not well received in RE community due to their length (3-6) over which people who have no steady income cannot sustain frequent attendance.

With regards to treatment at labor market, facilitator remembered a case of RE auto mechanic, who was one of the best during his vocational training, who applied for a job and he was told directly:

” Sorry, I can't hire you because I will not have enough costumers.”

There are currently **assistants** in area of employment, but their positions are financed by HELP project, instead of state or municipality. Podgorica is rare example where assistants in employment exist.

66 The same experience has been shared by female members of community we talked to. The only jobs being given to them has to do with cleaning.

67 One participant pointed out that there is no single RE driving public busses, or even garbage trucks.

68 Everyone with permanent residence in Montenegro has rights to Social Welfare.

Their main purpose is to foster smooth communication when RE population arrive at Bureau, to inform them about policies and active measures for employment, etc. Nonetheless, multiple participants in focus group with RE women have not heard about assistants in employment:

” *I don't know who is our mediator [assistant], nor where he is.*”

All stakeholders recognize the issue of **begging** is still very present. One participant even went that far to claim:

” *That's the biggest issue there is. Even bigger than discrimination.*”

Facilitator for the municipality of Podgorica argued that these families have no other way to survive, as they cannot get a job and they are not receiving social welfare. A RE mother we talked to shared the same opinion:

” *Someone has nothing to eat. It is still better to beg than to steal.*”

Yet, majority of members of RE community we talked to, confirmed their willingness to work:

” *Everyone would rather work than beg. We would all want to work, so that we can live like a rest of the people.* Another participant added: *“I would not work an illegal job. Everything legal, God bless, I would take.”*

Facilitator believes institutions are to be blamed, for not enforcing law which would keep children “off the street”. To his point, he added that number of children begging is rather small (15-20) and that they could be taken care of easily, if there was enough will⁶⁹. One participant described his personal experience with a family who is begging:

” *My neighbor. Every day I heard him beating his children and wife. To go to the city to beg and bring money home, whatever it takes. (...) Over time, it becomes a business.*”

When asked why he did not report this to authorities, person explained:

” *I wanted to, when I saw he is beating them. I told him ‘why are you doing that?’, but he answered that it is not mu concern, those are his own kids.*”

Municipality representative acknowledged the existence of the problem but have mentioned that situation in Podgorica is better than other regions of Montenegro:

” *I was in Pristan (part of Ulcinj) last weekend and there were literally 20 of them begging. In Skadar (city in Albania, near Montenegrin border) situation is also much worse.*”

Nevertheless, he stated that issues related to begging needs to be resolved by the efforts of the community itself – no external action can help. He stated that they cooperate with few young RE

⁶⁹ Reportedly, representatives of the Ministry of Labor and Social Care are aware of all these cases and know (by name) each child and family that engages in begging.

community members that one that could become community leaders and could persuade whole community to alter their behavior.

Health

According to facilitator's opinion situation in area of health is somewhat better, compared to the other areas, at least for those who have resolved legal status⁷⁰. This portion of RE population has chosen doctors and medical services is at satisfactory level. Community members also reported their children are being regularly immunized. Members of RE community we talked to, reported the high number of drug addicts at Health Center:

” *They literally break into a Health Center, into a room with injections. (...) I knew the guy who, after a discussion, took whole 'gray box' with him out of the Center.”*

While this is not the issue that specifically affects RE population, it is the only case where RE community volunteered to talk about the drug-related issues in their community⁷¹.

Same as in other areas, they reported what they believe is a discriminatory behavior of certain health workers:

” *I have seen this with my own eyes. As soon as you go to the old Health Center... (...) one women had a minor wound on her leg and doctor spend 2 minutes carefully reading what happened with her. Then she moved to my aunt, who has a seriously compromised heart, from diabetes...without knowing what is wrong with her, she barely browsed through the report.”*⁷²

RE participants we interviewed made a clear distinction between treatment they are receiving at Health Center at Konik, compared to the Health Center at Stari Aerodrom:

” *At Stari Aerodrom doctors are better. It is different compared to Konik, they are much nicer. (...) They have more will.”* Another female participant expanded on this: *“I had a problem with a doctor on Konik, so I signed off there. She did not act like a doctor to her patients. Instead, she was under influence of alcohol and she would scream at me. I told her she has to behave like I am not Roma, but equally as to anyone. She once threw my friend out of the office.”*

There are currently two **assistants** in area of health employed in Podgorica, and their positions are systematized⁷³. More improvement in this area could come from bringing more attention to

70 For those whose status is not resolved medical services are expensive (e.g. 700 euros for child delivery), so people often use other's health booklets.

71 Municipality representative stated that Office for prevention of the illnesses related to addiction (Kancelarija za prevenciju bolesti zavisnosti) is established in Podgorica and that it works also with addicts from RE population.

72 Some of the reported bad experiences due to fact they have to wait for months to see a specialist. Yet, other members of focus group reacted that this is not only RE-related issues, but rather an indicator of state in which health system is in.

73 To best of facilitator's knowledge, they used to be paid through HELP project, but now expenses are covered by the Ministry of Health.

the value of education, **preventive care**, especially in the area of reproductive health. Facilitator elaborated further on this:

” *Not enough is being done in a direction of prevention of sexually transmitted diseases. (...) Maybe this could be another role of mediators, (...) especially in younger ages when women enter marriages with little or no knowledge.”*

In general, RE population reported going to the doctor only when they are sick or in need of medical check-up. RE community pointed out that they would like to receive some sort of financial help specifically dedicated to medicine:

” *There are some pills that help us, but we cannot buy them anywhere. And these that I am taking...box costs 27 euros. That's a lot, and I have to take them all the time, due to thrombosis. (...) Sometimes they give us receipt, but we still have to pay for them.”*

Representative of the local authorities stated that municipality has reduced scope of action in this field due to heavy centralization of health system under the Ministry of Health. They act mainly through education campaigns focused on prevention of bad health habits. Representative stressed importance of education, especially related to reproductive health as one of main problems in this area:

” *It starts with education – no education, especially related to reproduction, generates problems with housing because it is always not enough housing units that we can provide. Then it affects employment status and education level of new generations. It's a circle, circle all the time.”*

Tivat

Tivat is the only municipality in ROMACTED program where the size of Egyptian population surpasses the one of Roma. Based on 2011 Census data there are almost 10 times more Egyptians than Roma in Tivat, 335 to 35. They mostly live in four settlements: Gradiošnica, Marići, Lovanje and 7. jul.

Status of RE population in municipality of Tivat, according to opinion of all stakeholders we talked to, has been significantly improved in recent time. While a lot more should be done to bring RE population closer to living conditions of the general population, in comparison to majority of other municipalities in ROMACTED, Tivat appears to be in the most **advantageous** position. In many ways this appear to be a byproduct of municipality being financially secure and located in the coastal are. In other words, much more than others they were in a position to “put the money where they mouth is” and provide material support for recommended social programs.

Education

In general terms, RE population in Tivat see current situation in the area of education in a positive manner. Representatives of RE community, local government, as well as facilitator, all agree that today RE population in Tivat recognizes the importance of education. As a result, representative of the municipality was eager to share that *“at this moment, we don’t have a single kid who should be attending elementary school but does not attend.”* Unlike in many other municipalities, RE population in Tivat has received **extensive support** from the local government. For instance, it has reported to us that while state provides books for first-grades, the rest is provided by municipality of Tivat. Furthermore, local authorities pay for the transportation and annual stipend for those who enroll in high school.⁷⁴ Needless to say, these programs do not cover all the costs of education, but they appear as efficient tool for motivating children and encouraging them to proceed with their education.

Especially important role in improving education among RE population is played by **assistants**. Since 2015, there are two of them in the municipality of Tivat. In the rest of the Montenegro they are being paid by the Ministry of Education, except for Tivat municipality, where they are financed by the local government. One of the participants explained beneficial role of assistants in a following way:

” *If it were not for them, we could not do anything. She [name of the assistant] helped my kids a lot. (...) Maybe my kids went hungry to school, but she gave them a lot. We are really grateful.”*

Potential reason why assistants in Tivat are doing somewhat better in comparison with most other municipalities may also lie in the fact that they are gender-balanced. We came across of situations in which girls are not comfortable approaching a male assistant in the same way they would a female. Naturally, focus has been shifted towards increasing the **quality of education** RE population receive, which would grant them fair chances to proceed to secondary education or even university.

⁷⁴ Besides financial, additional reasons for success that we came across are the fact that people in municipality are better informed than usual and assistants in area of education are coming from RE population.

With that in mind, our interviewees identified two major obstacles RE population faces in Tivat – **language** and **migration**. Namely, members of RE population who came from Kosovo have a language barrier, which can prevent them from progressing at the same pace as the general population. According to the facilitator, initially these children did not attend kindergarten and later in school they only interacted with each other. However, since assistants got involved, they started going to the kindergarten after age of three and learning the language. Results were described in following way:

” *With the language, they have same chances. Now we have children who are great students and who go to competitions.*”

The one educational problem municipality still has no answer to is drop-out due to migration. This issue affects mostly RE population with status of a displaced person, whose whole families leave the country at once.⁷⁵ However, even if they return children have a hard time proceeding with education after they have skipped few grades. At this point, according to our interviewees, no school in the area have been licensed for part-time education, where they could continue their studies. In words of representative of the municipality:

” *This means when these children return from Germany in the next two years, they cannot take any exams until the age of fifteen. Only then they can join, not elementary education, but Workers University in Nikšić or Herceg Novi. But that’s not it, it’s not that kind of education, (...) it that does not have the quality as regular elementary education.*”

Housing

RE population in Tivat is also composed of both domicile and displaced persons, and here too a pattern of clear difference between these sub-groups emerges. Four settlements in Tivat municipality are predominantly inhabited with RE population: Gradiošnica and Marići, where domicile RE population largely have managed to improve housing conditions; and 7. jul and Lovanje, where housing issues keep affecting RE population in serious manner. Facilitator for municipality of Tivat named housing as the key problem for RE population in Tivat. Representative of the municipality expressed striking difference in following way:

” *I mean, if we are to compare settlement in Gradiošnici and the one in 7th July...it’s like...I don’t know...comparing Sunset Boulevard in Hollywood and some social settlement.*”

Despite the fact that most of Roma and Egyptian people in Tivat have bought land and built houses that belong to them, two problematic settlements still mostly lay on **private land**, upon which Roma families cannot build. Barrack in which they live were built after the earthquake in 1979. out of secondary material. Later on, people built without any legal or civil-engineering permits. In 7. Jul they are connected to communal network and they pay electricity and water. Yet, in Lovanje settlement members of RE community have only **indirect and partial access to electricity**⁷⁶, water and public sewage. As it was explained by one participant:

⁷⁵ It has been reported by the representatives of local authorities that very often RE population deported from abroad back to Montenegro “hide” documents of other countries, which makes their integration more difficult: “Some of them enter the procedure for solving citizenship issue, and then after 6 months we learn that person has already got the documents in Kosovo. We never know how much of information are truthful.”

⁷⁶ Reportedly, they are attached to a nearby company’s network, who gave them permission practically for free. As a result, they have only

” *It was a transient solution in an emergency situation long time ago, but it remained like that.*”

How this solution work for RE population today is clear:

” *Lovanje settlement has no basic things needed for life [electricity, water, sewage](...) everyone is nervous and depressed, and how they wouldn't be. They live on someone else's land, day at a time, and nothing is legalized.*”

Employment

Better status of RE population in **labor market** in Tivat compared to majority of other municipalities seem to be predicated upon two conditions: somewhat better educational background of RE population and Tivat being popular seaside touristic destination. Admittedly, RE population appears to be better informed as they independently seek jobs through public calls. Also, starting from March there are many opportunities to get **seasonal jobs** in tourism sector. According to the facilitators, although there are no assistants in area of employment, members of RE community are well aware of these opportunities, and they *“themselves submit requests, inquire and apply.”* Based on personal testimonies, during the seasonal work treatment in Tivat is same for everyone:

” *They worked the same ways others did. This is probably because Tivat is a small municipality and there is always a shortage of workforce in seasonal jobs during summer.”*

Outside of service sector⁷⁷, the majority of members of RE community are employed at Public Waste Disposal company. Despite the fact that RE in Tivat are being employed at higher rate, they are still “denied” **access** to better paid jobs. The main obstacle being education beyond elementary level. From municipality they told us that:

” *Someone working in the municipality should have at least a secondary school. We can practically count all the people that have finished secondary school. That's the problem.”*

When asked about the issue of **begging**, interviewees reported a single “controversial family”. This family sends children to beg and facilitator reportedly asked if these children can be temporarily taken away due to neglect, but it is not administratively viable as they have no documentation⁷⁸. This was further supported by the representative of the municipality, who when asked about begging said:

” *As for Tivat... no chance. Sometimes it occurs, but not often. When it does, these are from other municipalities or out of Montenegro who are coming here to beg.”*

lights at home, but not water heaters, washing machines etc. Electricity they receive indirectly has no power for it, so they are forced to wash clothes manually. *“Its weak electricity, it has no capacity. We had victims too, even three children. Six families lost their homes, everything burned down. It must be resolved.”*

77 Representatives of local government stated that around 25 women are working in kitchens, plus those who work in hotels as maids. About 25 women work privately the same job. Reportedly, they earn 300-400 euros per month.

78 None of the members have documents. We do not know the country of origin or where to register now. They will not provide information, they are stateless.

In Tivat there are two types of **social welfare benefits** for RE population. One is this state through the Social Work Center and the other through the municipality of Tivat. The Municipality gives one-off assistance (175 euros). Social welfare from Social Center depends on a size of a family (80-220 euros), and they also provide additional help for medical needs (50e). The municipality also provides school bags, books for children, stipends for school excursions, in addition to what is being provided by the Ministry of Education. Most of the social welfare goes to paying bills.

Health

Based on the data we collected, it appears that RE population living in Tivat does not experience major health problems, especially compared to other municipalities. This, of course, does not mean that many members of RE community do not have serious health issues that affect general population at much lesser rate. Yet, during interviewees and focus groups we confirmed that by large RE population in Tivat have their chosen doctors, they are immunized, and they visit doctor on a more or less regular basis. As on participant recalled:

” *From my personal experience, every time I’m there [hospital], there is either a Roma woman or an Egyptian. Are they out there just for a check-up or some kind of vaccine, I am not sure but I always see them.*”

However, similar to the other municipalities, health-related issues that are specific to RE population come from poor living condition. On our question what municipality could do to improve situation in area of health, facilitator was clear:

” *First, the housing conditions have to change. That’s the key. That is the minimum one can expect. Their health would change if their housing condition improved.*”

Another member of community summarized it in following way: *„Those who live in good conditions feel good, their children go to school...and those who live in bad conditions, like Lovanje and July 7th, usually have problems. Especially in winter.*”

With regards to the treatment RE population gets in their interaction with employees in health system, for the most part impressions are positive:

” *The majority of them [doctors] are good. You can find at times someone who is really like she [prejudiced doctor] was, but mostly, as far as health is concerned...they are not bad.*”

Ulcinj

Among all municipalities in ROMACTED program, Ulcinj has the least number of RE inhabitants (232), based on 2011 Census data. Approximately two thirds of this number are Roma population (159). The highest concentration of RE population can be found in following settlements: Totoši, Pinješ, Kodre, Đerane and Bijela Gora.

Education

The local government in Ulcinj appears to be fully aware of problems RE population faces in the area of education. Nonetheless, they claim that in last 10 to 15 years situation has **significantly improved**, as the number of RE children in educational system has increased considerably. Based on facilitator's opinion, the best situation is in Totoši settlement, where Egyptians live⁷⁹, then in Pinješ, Kodre and Đerane. Unquestionably, the situation is most worrisome among RE population in Bijela Gora, where reportedly there is no electricity or water. In general, members of RE community state that they recognize the importance of education. Yet, some of them clearly doubt the connection between education and improved quality of life. One father explained difficulties in educating children in current setting:

” I am a high school graduate and I started cleaning up trash around city. When I told my kids, who were in elementary school, ‘go to school and study’ they responded with ‘why should we go to school when you finished [high school] and still work in the trash?’”

One Roma mother shared the same general impression that education is crucial, while arguing that it is especially hard educating children in current situation:

” Many times, I don't [send them to school]. They go without books and without clothes and shoes.” Another person added: “When there is an excursion, we can never be a part of it, because we are not able to [afford it] ... we don't get along with classmates because there's this distance.”

Facilitator for municipality of Ulcinj claims that RE population receives elementary school books for free⁸⁰. Representative of the municipality stated that they hardly have any **jurisdiction** over educational policy, but they try to help through sponsoring sport activities and providing school equipment. Despite the fact that, for example, books are being provided, there are **many costs of education** that remain “invisible” to the authorities, argue RE parents. While they value the help they are receiving, for the most part they have hard time providing money for meals, shoes, clothes and, especially, transportation⁸¹, which is not organized. With regards to the higher education, they reported high tuition and accommodation prices as major problem:

” They have an advantage [RE from Podgorica] ... Universities are over there... while we have to pay for accommodation, transport, food and drinks”

79 When it comes to language too, facilitator believes the Egyptians are in a better situation because they speak Albanian, which is dominant in Ulcinj. Roma people, on the other hand, speak only Roma which puts them in a worse situation because they need two foreign languages - Montenegrin and Albanian - for basic functioning.

80 Nonetheless, he also states that this practice often deviates from the law, as books are sometimes old, torn, drawn onto, etc.

81 Participants living in Pinješ settlement reported lack of transportation for children attending school. Apparently, local administration covers transport for children living more than 4km away from school, while their settlement is “only” 3km away.

Yet, once faced with information that state universities are now free, a large part of the group was not aware of that of that fact. In Ulcinj, there are currently no **assistants** in area of education. Facilitator believes employing at least one would be imperative. Yet, he believes their mandates should be expanded. In addition of mediating between school administration and parents, they should be helping children with their homework, as parents often cannot.

Each group of stakeholders we talked to recognizes the fact that RE population does not have equal chances for education, compared to general population. Clear indication of this is early drop-out among RE children. According to facilitator, girls tend to leave school year or two earlier than boys (5th-6th grade) in order to help with housework or “to prepare for an **early marriage**”⁸². As one female participant offered cultural explanation for gender differences in educational performance:

” Currently yes [gender equality], but before men were pushed much more. With girls it was ‘sit at home and do housework’ but now it’s a bit more equal”.

Representative from local government also recognized “mentality differences” with regards to **gender differences** in education. Members of Roma community confirm arranged marriages are not purely a matter of the past, but they see it differently than general population:

” ...a 21 years old guy...there are no Roma girls for him in Ulcinj, he would have to meet someone outside of the town...or to arrange it in order to get married. He is 21 and single, that’s already too late for us. Another three years and no one would give him [daughter]. We won’t be able even to arrange him a marriage”.⁸³

For those who remain in the education system, the most severe obstacle is **discriminatory treatment** in the classroom. One member of RE population in Ulcinj, shared with as one of the most severe cases of **segregation** in education. He described, what he perceived as an attempt at creating a segregated classroom in elementary school ‘Josip Broz Tito’:

” There were three Albanian language classes, but there were too many students [above 28], so they [school administration] assembled another class and took Roma and Egyptian children, with few addition of children who came from rural area, and put them into one class. So, they made elite out of other classrooms, and one classroom with all RE and newcomers to Ulcinj and Montenegro.”

When asked about the reaction, he elaborated:

” I even talked with school director... there were few quarrels, but he simply told me ‘If you want, I can return your kid where it was before [initial classroom]. I was not interested only in my kid, rest of the parents didn’t even know what happened... (...) so no one raised voice”.

82 He also pointed out the important distinction between arranged and forced marriages, especially when it comes to underaged persons who need parents’ consent. In other municipalities we observed importance of this distinction, as many RE claim the former are not an issue. Female participants explained changes that occurred over time: “I met him [husband] when I was getting married...it was like that before. Now, it’s not like this, they go to school now.”

83 Male participants in focus group reported that in their belief 23-24 years of age as a limit, after which “train has passed”.

The creation of ethnically-segregated classroom, consisted of Roma children with addition to 2-3 Albanian children from rural areas, was again mentioned during the female focus group. Less dramatic ways in which RE children are being demotivated to attend school include sitting in the back benches. While we observed similar events taking place in other municipalities in Montenegro, we rarely met parents willing to claim that professors or teachers openly use discriminatory language in the classroom. One mother reported teacher threatening students who acted inappropriately with *"I will put you in the back bench with Roma."*

Housing

In recent times there were no projects with purpose of building housing units for Roma and Egyptian population⁸⁴. The last of such actions was taken during 1970s when domicile Egyptian population was "moved" from city center to the periphery, to Totoše settlement. Representatives of local government told us that housing is major issue for RE population, but that municipality **cannot solve it on its own**. They described their abilities in terms of providing land on which RE population can build and waiving utility costs as way of positive discrimination. Yet, according to them, without help of donators or state, there is no much hope for significant improvements.

RE population **illegally** inhabited building of former factory in Bijela Gora. This space is improvised housing unit, without doors, windows, electricity and water⁸⁵. Reportedly, municipality is taking no measures to either evict them or solve their problems. Often, legal status of the land where RE population lives is unresolved. For instance, in one part of Pinješ settlement were Roma population lives for 30-40 years, land was owned by the municipality but now it is owned by private citizens/companies. The new owner is asking for financial compensation above the market price, which makes it impossible for RE population to pay:

” *We bought from his daughter, now 'real' owner showed up. We are now in court."*

Other participants too, mentioned costs of the procedure:

” *We need to sign up for legalization, but problem for all RE is cost of the legalization, which changes based on the location"*

From municipality they told us that they are not working actively to solve issue of illegal housing, as devastations or evictions would create additional problem and RE people would be even in a greater danger.

Facilitator stated that municipality should work on reducing legalization costs in order to foster the process. As in other municipalities, RE population in Ulcinj is also willing to live alongside other ethnicities, although they believe general population would be against it:

” *I think maybe 5% would like to have us as neighbors. (...)
Neighbors, imagine befriending us or something, God forbid."*

84 In this research we treat Roma and Egyptian population as members of the same ethnic group. However, Ulcinj is the only municipality where interviewees reported significant distance between the two groups. Facilitator claims that this distance is manifested in lack of willingness to start mixed marriages. Furthermore, although they face many of the same problem, settlements they inhabit manifest different "housing culture".

85 In other settlements they mostly are connected to the local utility network, but admittedly they pay bills only irregularly.

Road infrastructure is another issue our interviewees frequently mentioned. Situation in Totoše settlement is satisfactory, besides during extremely rainy seasons. In other settlements situation is “very bad”, according to the facilitator. Member of the community confirmed this and recalled the only time they got a proper access to their settlement only because general population needed passage to the cemetery:

” *We go through the cemetery to get to our homes. There is a pedestrian road, but you cannot pass because of snakes. Its closed now. Via car, we can go through the graveyard”.*

Members of RE community added that public traffic is “non-existing” in Ulcinj. RE population living outside of Totoši and Pinješ also reported poorly functioning public lighting infrastructure⁸⁶.

Employment

With regards to the employment, outside of Public Waste Disposal company members of RE community mostly work in **crafts and trade**. The limited scope of typical jobs covered by the RE population was confirmed by each group we talked to. Male participants we talked to reported most often working seasonal jobs, such as beach cleaners, “outdoor” guys in cafes and restaurants, or any other poorly paid job for which no CV is required. Women appear to be in even worse situation, as they mostly don’t even work. Based on their experience, employers are very **distrustful** of them and monitor their work in fear of stealing something from the inventory:

” (...) *Like you are a bandit. (...) They are watching you closely, they pretend they are working. They intentionally leave you something to provoke you, to see whether you going to take it or not”.*

Although they are registered with the Employment Bureau, they claim that they have not attended any courses. Representative of the local government believes that municipality’s ability to help is limited, through Secretariat for Economics which can give some incentives for employment and small and medium-sized enterprises. This view is not shared by the local RE community. They don’t believe local government is doing anything to help improve their position at labor market:

” *Whenever we look for a job that is not picking up trash, no one wants to hire us. (...) Because we are Roma. Some of them had prejudice that we steal, lie...but they don’t know us”.*

One woman expressed her impression that this is not only the case in private sector:

” *No. They [local administration offices] would throw us as far from them as they could”.*

We were able to observe a consensus regarding the issue of **begging** in Ulcinj. Practically identical to other municipalities, domicile RE population condemns such phenomena. In contrast, it has been reported that displaced persons from Kosovo engage to such behavior at significant rate. According to our interviewees, begging is especially widespread in Bijela Gora settlement,

⁸⁶ They claim that in the pre-election period, representatives of political parties come with promises to improve the infrastructure conditions, but nothing major changes.

where facilitator reported cases of underaged child begging. Despite efforts of OSCE⁸⁷ almost half of inhabitants have not resolved their legal status. Each group of interviewees clarified that this is especially problematic issue during summer season, due to organized begging from Berane, Podgorica and Šabac (Serbia)⁸⁸. Members of RE community, however, claimed that besides individual cases, begging is not organized in a way facilitator claimed. They described one case of father forcing his family to meet “the quota”:

” A lot of times happened that a [begging] child comes to the club I worked for, and I tell him to go home, he says ‘I cannot go home to my father until I bring 10 euros’.”

Participants said they value work more than begging, although during summer one can earn more “on the street”. When asked about what should be done, they argued strict measurements against fathers, who they see as main motivators, paired with more attention to women and children, would be an efficient strategy to begin with.

Health

According to facilitator, health care among RE population in Ulcinj is at satisfactory level for those whose legal status is resolved. Members of RE community reported they all have chosen doctors and that all children are regularly immunized. This has been confirmed also by the facilitator. Nevertheless, some of them shared opinion that medical personnel could be more efficient and complained against established habits of looking at RE with **intolerance**:

” When you go to Bar, they ask you ‘Don’t you have doctors in Ulcinj?’ (...) When you choose your doctor you should be able to ask him how to do something or to complain to him, not that he just looks how to get rid of you. (...) or ‘What is wrong with you?! If I knew I would not be visiting doctor.’”

Same as in other areas, situation is significantly better in Totoši settlement, together with parts of Pinješ, while in Bijela Gora and Đerane are lagging behind.

Although facilitator’s opinion that municipality is somewhat limited in their ability to influence the health care system, as it is very centralized, he failed to recognize major obstacles or discriminations specific to RE population, at the level of rejecting to provide health care. Yet some members of RE community pointed out discriminatory behavior despite being provided with health service:

” (...) [doctor speaks] ‘don’t touch me, don’t. Stay where you are!’ (...) Before me one [Roma] woman entered. Doctor came out and opened the door. He does not want to sit in the same room where a member of... was already inside. That happened.”

⁸⁷ In form of free transport to Kosovo and paid taxes for issuing documentation.

⁸⁸ Facilitator explained that he/she believes they are brought to Ulcinj by the organized criminal groups from outside of Ulcinj municipality. Representative of the local authorities confirmed that, indeed, they are witnessing an organized begging, where RE from other municipalities are “being brought via vans in the morning and picked up in the evening”.

Yet, facilitator suggests that during summer tourist clinics could/should be open to pay greater attention to health of RE community. Just like in case of educational policies, facilitator stressed out importance of information. Under this view, it is imperatively important to provide funding from budget to disseminate information to RE population regarding activities envisaged by the Strategy for Social Inclusion. Participants in the focus group expressed belief that it would be beneficial if assistants in area of health were introduced. However, they wish assistants to be members of Roma community:

” Only few mediators are Roma [in Podgorica]. (...) We want them to be Roma, instead of asking for a high school degree. (...) They should ask for elementary school, so that it can be Roma”

The main obstacle to such solution lies in what they called “strict requirements” as rarely members of RE population in Ulcinj have high school degree. In contrast, Facilitators we talked to, themselves argued against lowering criteria for position of assistant, as it would reduce the quality of the support RE population receives.

Health-related issue that has been reported only in Ulcinj, concerns female **reproductive health**. Facilitator pointed out that significantly higher number (50%) of RE children is being born in stationary, compared to general population. The reason for this lies in the fact that Ulcinj does not have a proper maternity hospital, but rather a stationary for obstetrics where babies are delivered only in emergency situations when reaching Bar hospital is not a viable option. This begs the question why RE women find themselves in such situation more often than the rest of the population? According to the facilitator’s opinion, it is the “lack of culture” for monitoring of pregnancy and economic conditions that unable women to have regular controls:

” There is clear lack of culture, so they come when it’s too late. I know from experience, I drove multiple times, (...) as pregnancy is not considered emergency situation, because it can and should be planned”.

We were able to confirm this during focus group with female members of RE community in Ulcinj. Namely, only one of them reported visiting gynecologist regularly due to the health condition she currently has, and another reported recent visit to gynecologist as a result of state-funded preventive testing (Papa test).⁸⁹

⁸⁹ They acknowledge that child-bearing happens mostly without a plan, i.e. “one by one”. Although they feel that it would be good to talk to the youth about sexual activities and family planning, they admit that their community is very closed-minded on this issue, and that it is still a taboo to talk to female children about it.

Recommendations

Based on the study we conducted, we were able to identify a number of problems that continue to affect quality of life of Roma and Egyptian population in each municipality participating in ROMACTED. Manifestation of these issues have taken numerous forms, depending on municipality's characteristics, such as: *region, economic development, size of RE community, existence of NGO dealing with rights of RE community*, etc. In previous section, we presented a part of deeply personal experiences Roma and Egyptian community shared with us. The true value of this analysis, we strongly believe, comes from articulating those personal accounts into policy recommendations, as well as making them a valid measure of efficiency of policies we have already adopted. We hope this analysis, and richness of data that participants have provided, will improve future Local Action Plans by making them more precise and specific.

Still, we remain cautious not to fall into a trap of one-sidedness and subjectivity. Hence, we would like to point out that the general conclusions we are presenting here, are a result of careful triangulation between all stakeholder we included in our study. While this list is not in any way exhaustive, we believe it accurately mirrors the most vital needs of Roma and Egyptian population in Montenegro.

Let us start with a syntagma that, more than anything else, describes how Roma and Egyptian community in Montenegro see their situation – **“a vicious circle”**. While many different groups in Montenegro may experience certain (or even the same) issues in education, housing, health or employment, none of them experiences such as strong **reinforcing effect**. Roma and Egyptian people have been told for decades that education is a path to better future, and rightfully so. Yet, this means nothing to a parent who sees his child drop-out from school, because she/he is bullied for not being clean or dressed as rest of the class. What general population fails to see is that this has much less to do with culture, and everything to do with housing conditions. So then fix your house, one may think? Well, that's easier said than done, if you have no money. Which you are likely not to have, because either employers or their customers are too prejudiced to think that you can deserve better than a hard, physical, and poorly paid job. Clearly, one should not forget to remind each individual, as well as RE community in general of their own responsibility. Indeed, many members of RE community are fully aware that it is not up to the rest of the society to deal with certain outdated practices still crippling their community. Rather, it is up to inter-generational discussion within Roma and Egyptian community to bring change and liberate progressive forces. However, we talked with too many honest, law abiding, and hard-working members of Roma or Egyptian population not to recognize that one cannot blame them for the distance we have created. They are nothing but objects of our prejudices.

Every complex social problem has multiple causes. While stakeholders we talked to did not always agree on what the source of the problem, in certain situation they all agreed what might be a good solution (or part of it). One of the most frequently cited solutions is introduction of **assistants for social inclusion**, whose job essentially is to mediate between institutions and RE community. Some municipalities have already employed them in certain areas, but their effect has been somewhat limited. Based on our data, we identified three ways in which assistants (mediators) can have much stronger impact. First, based on experiences from municipalities that have them, we can conclude that assistants are much more effective if they themselves are **members of RE** community. Second, there is clearly a need for more **gender balance** among assistants, especially in the area of health care, where reproductive awareness of women is of paramount importance. Third, employing assistants at **various levels** would clearly improve the efficiency. For instance, assistants in education at the level of pre-school appears to be an efficient strategy for early socia-

lization and learning, while having them at the level of high school would help increase chances RE individuals proceed with university education.

This brings us to another important conclusion. To this day, almost the entire focus of local governments is dedicated to **quantity**, at the expense of **quality**. While it is somewhat natural, given the circumstances, to measure success in education via number of RE children who are regularly attending classes, this may confuse local administration to what is actually the goal here. Indeed, more successful municipalities already started shifting their attention onto quality of knowledge children are leaving school with. With regards to this, one thing we consistently heard from RE parents was that they need help in **teaching assistants** and **study rooms**. Simply, a child should not suffer from the fact that her/his parents are often not educated enough to help them understand lessons or provide a separate room with electricity where they can study in peace.

Very much in the same way responsible authorities are focusing on fighting **consequences** instead of acting **preventively**. This has been proved possible by municipality which “solved” the language barrier problem by enrolling RE children in pre-school classes. In turn, this can increase both the level of integration and children’s ability to follow lectures and decrease chances for drop-out. Along the same line, instead of looking for a significantly more expensive way to provide for non-qualified person who freshly returned to Montenegro, opening schools licensed for part-time education and late **re-enrollment**, would limit many of the negative effects of migration-based drop-out. Similarly, in the area of housing, rushed and nontransparent way of choosing **location** for newly build settlements fails to bring positive change in other areas of life for RE people. For instance, building on a concreted instead of flood-prone area would improve ability of RE community to maintain their health and hygiene at significantly higher level.

Personal experiences we have presented in the analysis shows that **discrimination** against Roma and Egyptian population is still rather widespread, both in public and private sector. It is our assertion that part of the problem lies in the notion many in general population have – that RE population is completely **homogeneous**. No other group in a society is so consistently being judged based on the behavior of its worse members. Where this increased perception of homogeneity comes from? The vast literature on psychology of intergroup relations points out to a simple fact that the more segregated group is, the more homogeneous it is perceived by other groups in a society. Thus, no amount of trainings or workshops focusing on health or educational personnel would significantly change the levels of discrimination. Only more **integration** will, and we have proof of that in certain municipalities of Montenegro.

Lastly, while people we talked to readily admit that situation, in many regards, has improved significantly over last period of time, more often than not those changes were a result of **individual who are aware** and who lead by their own example. These positive examples, as much as they make us happy as humans, are indication of lack of systematic institutional solutions. In a similar fashion, many of the positive changes we have witnessed were a result of international project activities. Unfortunately, once those projects were finished many of its features failed to become a constant part of institutional designed that could continue to benefit Roma and Egyptian population for years to come.

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The European Union is a unique economic and political partnership between 28 democratic European countries. Its aims are peace, prosperity and freedom for its 500 million citizens – in a fairer, safer world. To make things happen, EU countries set up bodies to run the EU and adopt its legislation. The main ones are the European Parliament (representing the people of Europe), the Council of the European Union (representing national governments) and the European Commission (representing the common EU interest).

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