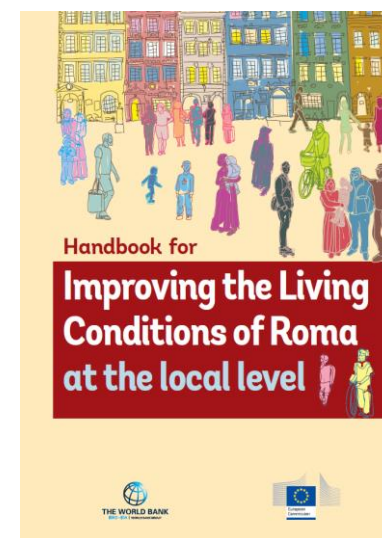# Handbook for Improving the Living Conditions of Roma at the Local Level

Slovenia, November 26-27, 2015

Background

A disproportionately large number of Roma in Europe today face deep poverty, social exclusion, and poor living conditions.

The EU Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies up to 2020 invites the Member States to make sufficient use of EU and national funding to address Roma integration needs.

Purpose and Use of the Handbook

The handbook provides practical advice to local authorities and civil society organizations that prepare and implement interventions to improve the living conditions of Roma, using European, national, or local funds.

It suggests hands-on, practical approaches, techniques, and tools for executing interventions and enhancing their quality.

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An Integrated Approach

Why an integrated approach?

Various needs and gaps affect each other, so addressing only one need or gap may not lead to effective or sustainable results

Various needs and gaps may share a common cause. This means that a given intervention may be able to address more than one need/gap.

A gap or need often has multiple causes, which must be addressed together to make a positive impact.

Examples of integrated approaches

Combine interventions across more than one sector

(Example: link housing and health interventions to improve child health)

Combine hard (physical) and soft (service) measures

(Example: combine the construction of a community center with the training of social workers to run youth programmes at the center)

Combine supply-side and demand-side measures

(Example: in the case of a health clinic, address both lack of health care providers (supply) and lack of awareness by users (demand))

Share common resources to implement multiple activities

(Example: the same social worker can help disadvantaged Roma access social services while also serving as a bridge between Roma communities and public officials)

Four Key Guiding Points

(1) Focus on interventions that target poor and disadvantaged Roma

Not all Roma are poor or disadvantaged. Measures should target Roma who experience social exclusion and poor living conditions rather than Roma in general.

In targeting poor and disadvantaged Roma, it is also important to follow the principle of "explicit but not exclusive targeting" of Roma.

(2) Enable customization of interventions to specific local needs

The most effective interventions are tailored to address a community's specific priorities and needs.

An intervention that is successful in one community may not necessarily be suited for another.

To be effective, an intervention must be adapted to the needs and conditions of a specific local context.

(3) Address barriers to provision and use of services

"If we build it, they will come" … Building infrastructure or making new services available will not necessarily result in their utilization.

If people are not aware of a service / its benefits, or if user fees are unaffordable, people will not access it.

Fear of being mistreated or humiliated by providers can also discourage people from using a service.

Funding needs to be available for complementary interventions to reduce constraints to access and use.

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(4) Ensure that interventions come with a clear exit strategy

An intervention's impacts shouldn't disappear with its completion / end of funding. Financial and institutional arrangements for operating and maintaining the activities should continue beyond the initial funding.

Financial resources, administrative capacity, and a governance structure need to be in place so that local services and facilities can be managed by local actors and used by residents, include build these capacities and make them self-sustaining.

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Community Participation

Why community participation?

Local community members know what is needed, why it is needed, what the barriers are, what can be done, what is affordable to users, and what can be maintained.

Participation increases community ownership and the ability of residents to maintain and operate an intervention, thus increasing the chances that it will be sustained over time.

Key Steps in Formulating Interventions for Improving the Living Conditions of Roma at the Local Level
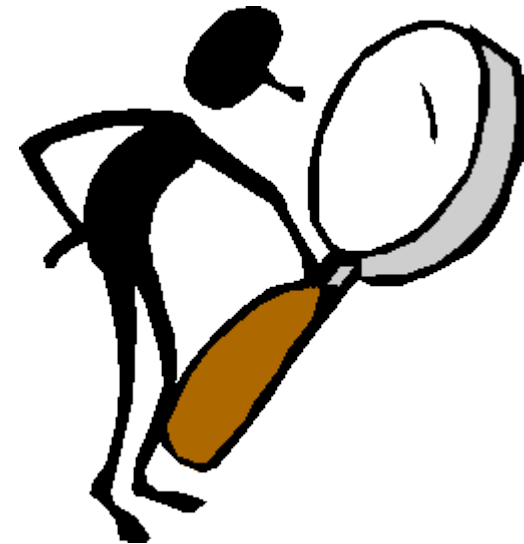
Step 1: Identify Needs and Barriers
When designing interventions,
it is not enough to identify needs; one must also assess
the barriers that prevent communities from meeting those needs.

Example of a need and its barriers:

Need:

- Community members need better access to health services

Barriers:

- Health center does not exist
- Existing health centers are too far away (no transportation)
- Community members lack personal identification documents
- Health services are not tailored to the community's cultural context (providers may not speak the community's language).

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Step 2: Prioritize Needs and Interventions
Identify Options
It is important to recognize that there
are often various options available to meet the same need, and that several interventions
can be integrated to address a community's specific combination of needs and barriers.

Examples of available options

Need	What can be done
Access to basic community services	Rural/semi-rural neighbourhood upgrading
	Urban neighbourhood upgrading
Safe location	Public safety programmes for crime and violence prevention
	Resettlement and livelihood restoration
Accessible and well-connected communities	Improving connectivity to existing markets and social services
	Bringing markets and social services to the neighbourhood
Spatial integration	Desegregation
Adequate housing	Housing improvements
	Construction of new housing
	Making existing housing units available to the community by brokering supply and demand
Civil documents:	Providing civil documents
Security of tenure	Real property rights regularization schemes
Capacity of social service providers and equal treatment	Teacher training
	Training of health care providers
	School mediators
	Health mediators
	Community social workers
	Education support, including extracurricular activities
	Public employment
Skills, information, awareness, and capacity of community members	Training and skills enhancement
	Comprehensive local employment services
	Parent involvement
	Awareness raising
Income	Employment services and opportunities
	Microfinance:
	Scholarship programmes

Prioritize needs and interventions

Disadvantaged communities generally suffer from a series of disadvantages, which cannot all be addressed at the same time given limited resources.

Local planners must therefore think about trade-offs when deciding which needs to address with which interventions.

The prioritization of needs and interventions should take into account multiple variables, including value and significance to the community, feasibility, and cost-effectiveness.

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Factors to consider

Cost-effectiveness. For the same amount of money, how much impact would each of the interventions generate?

Coverage. For a given investment of resources, which intervention would cover the largest number of beneficiaries? While some interventions may have a greater impact per individual or household than other interventions, and may therefore be technically cost-effective, they may still be undesirable if they can only be implemented with a small number of beneficiaries.

Low-hanging fruit. It may be useful to consider options that are easy to implement and can produce significant benefits in a short time.

Sequencing. When multiple interventions are envisioned, is important to sequence them correctly by asking what needs to be in place for each intervention to work most effectively.

Step 3: Mitigate risks to achieving effective
and sustainable results

Risks to achieving effective impacts

Many Roma communities are highly impoverished, and merely providing new infrastructure or services will not necessarily result in their utilization.

If people are not aware of a service's benefits, or if it is too costly to access, they will not be able to utilize it.

Even when a service itself is provided free of charge, people may decide not to access it if other related costs are too high.

Fear of being mistreated or humiliated by service providers could also discourage people from accessing a service.

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Risks to achieving sustainable impacts

In many cases, interventions are designed without sufficient consideration of the recurrent costs (operational and maintenance) beyond the initial funding.

Service providers often face additional challenges when they operate in marginalized communities. These include high maintenance and operation costs and low cost recovery rates. These disincentives can discourage service providers and public utility companies from continuing to serve these areas, especially once project funds cease to pay for their services.

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Risks to be considered	Examples of Mitigation Actions
Lack of Awareness	• public awareness campaigns • outreach activities by (community) social workers and mediators • public consultations (through community social workers)
Low Affordability	• involvement of local workforce in project activities, • training the local target population to be hired to operate and manage the service/facility • employment and income generation interventions
Inadequate Organizational Capacity	• technical assistance for forming and running service users' associations • facilitation support for formation of associations • training users' associations or committees
High Transactions and Opportunity Costs	• providing affordable transportation to access the service • providing mobile services (such as mobile clinics) • introducing public safety measures (e.g., street lights at night, community patrols, CCTV cameras) • adjusting operational hours to meet the life patterns of the target population • clustering services to reduce the combined time required in accessing services • cultural competency training for social service providers • deploying social workers and mediators
Lack of Civil Documentation	• proactive support for issuance of personal IDs and property rights
Intergroup grievances and mistrusts	• incorporating collaborative activities, such as those that require sharing responsibilities • organizing recreational activities and campaigns against discrimination.

Good Practice 1: Engage Local
Communities

Key Points

✓ Consultations with local communities can increase their support for interventions.

✓ Various consultation methods can be used to seek information and advice from community members.

✓ Citizen feedback mechanisms help maintain channels of communication with the local community or beneficiary group.

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Consultation Methods

Format	Description
Public Feedback through Comments	Make a call for public comments. It should outline an easily accessible method for submitting comments, such as by e-mail, social media, letters, or telephone, and define a reasonable time period.
Interviews	Interviews can be conducted by phone or face-to-face to elicit stakeholders' perceptions on issues relevant to the project.
Workshops	A meeting or series of meetings can be organized for discussions on particular topics relevant to the planned or ongoing intervention.
Community Gathering/ Town hall Meeting	A large forum or community meeting can be used to share information with a large group of community members in a transparent manner. Such an event requires careful preparation to keep the discussion focused on the intended issue.
E-discussions	Web-based discussions can be held through e-mail lists, blogs, or on a website.
Communication through Social Workers	Having a permanent, on-the-ground presence of community social workers can facilitate daily communication with the community. Social workers can gather the most current information through active and continuous dialogue with the community members.

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Example of citizen feedback mechanism

- Community members are given clear and reliable information about an intervention.

- At any stage, affected persons can complain directly to the designated staff. A designated contact information is made available to the public for this purpose.

- The local authority makes every effort to achieve an amicable settlement of all complaints/grievances.

- If a complain cannot be resolved, local authorities convene a Citizen Feedback Committee. The committee hears the case and provides a response.

- If the case is still not resolved, it may be submitted by either party to the national-level authority or to a court.

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Good Practice 2: Address Spatial
Segregation of Roma

Key Points

- ✓ Desegregation and non-segregation are different.

- ✓ Desegregation as well as non-segregation measures can be funded in segregated neighbourhoods.

- ✓ Projects should avoid generating increased concentration or further physical isolation of deprived Roma communities.

Distinguish Desegregation from Non-segregation

✓ **Desegregation** means to undo segregation. It is an action or process that ends the existing separation of two groups

✓ **Non-segregation** means implementing interventions without creating segregation or reinforcing existing segregation.

✓ Non-segregation does not in itself achieve spatial desegregation, but both approaches can improve the living conditions of people in segregated neighbourhoods.

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Promote spatial desegregation through short and long term actions

- **Awareness raising and consultation.**

- **Preserving supportive social networks.**

- **Enhancing cultural competency and combating discrimination.**

- **Mediating conflicts and communication gaps.**

- **Restoring or improving income-generation activities.**

Use non-segregation interventions to promote spatial desegregation

There are measures that enhance the Roma's ability and opportunities to take part in broader society.

- Improving connectivity

- Upgrading housing

- Providing social services

The coverage and quality of housing and social services can be improved in segregated neighbourhoods without spatial desegregation measures, <u>as long as they are provided on a non-segregated basis</u>.

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Good Practice 3: Plan Resettlement
Carefully and Mitigate Negative Impacts

Key Points

✓ In cases where resettlement is not really needed, use alternative measures to avoid or minimize displacement.

✓ If resettlement is necessary, seek measures to mitigate its negative social and economic impacts.

✓ Land acquisition and resettlement, if not properly managed, can lead to loss of assets, income, and social support networks, as well as social tension, delays, and cost overruns.

✓ Affected people should be compensated for lost assets.

✓ If resettlement is necessary, it may offer an opportunity to improve people's economic and social well-being through measures that include spatial desegregation.

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Good practices for mitigating negative impacts of resettlement

- ✓ Assess whether Resettlement is required and explore alternatives

- ✓ Assess probable social impacts of resettlement

- ✓ Prepare a resettlement action plan

- ✓ Consult stakeholders

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Good Practice 4: Formalize Real Property Rights

Key Points

- ✓ Lack of formal real property rights can prevent Roma from accessing basic infrastructure, social services, and credit.
- ✓ It is essential to gather comprehensive information about the status of properties in the community.
- ✓ Alternatives to full ownership rights include possession certificates, administrative authorization, and leases.
- ✓ Specific measures may be needed to assist vulnerable individuals who face additional challenges in formalizing their real property rights.
- ✓ Regularization of Roma settlements and regularization of the real property rights of their inhabitants are distinct but complementary measures.

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Gather comprehensive information about real property rights in the community

Key information to be collected includes:
- **Status of real properties**
- **Need for formalization of real properties**

It is not always the case that informal properties need to be formalized. For example, when families occupy an area that is unsuitable for residential use for safety or environmental reasons, their occupation should not be supported by formalizing it.

Consider whether granting a full ownership right is the best option

Common alternatives to full ownership include:

- ✓ **Possession certificates**

- ✓ **Administrative authorizations**

- ✓ **Leases**

Identify vulnerable individuals and adopt specific measures to assist them

- Identify vulnerable individuals
- Assess the specific challenges they might face in formalizing their properties
- Define measures to assist them.

Some possible measures:
- Register property rights in the names of both spouses
- Provide free legal assistance to low-income families
- Exempt poor households from registration fees.

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Good Practice 5: Monitor and Evaluate
Interventions with the Community

Key Points

✓ M&E can help identify barriers and necessary changes to project design.

✓ Participatory M&E permits continuous, on-the-ground tracking of results and leads to higher accountability and ownership at the community level.

✓ Designing M&E plans with the beneficiaries allows stakeholders to understand how activities are linked to outcomes.

✓ A good participatory M&E plan defines what will be monitored, when and who will collect the information, and who will be informed.

Construct a results chain with community involvement

Impacts (Results)	**Long-term effects (higher level objectives to which the project contributes)** Examples: improved household income, improved productivity, decreased incidence of disease
Outcomes (Results)	**Results or effects of outputs** Examples: access to market increased, more students are enrolled in school, students learn better in school, babies less susceptible to communicable diseases
Outputs	**Products/services produced or provided** Examples: roads constructed, new classrooms built, teachers trained with enhanced teaching methods, babies immunized
Activities	**What the project does** Examples: constructing roads, building new classrooms, training school teachers with enhanced teaching methods, health center providing immunizations
Inputs	**Resources** Examples: money, equipment, supplies, staff, technical expertise

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Prepare an M&E Plan

- Who will be responsible for gathering information;
- The sources of information;
- The format in which the information will be presented;
- The periodicity of information gathering;
- Who in the community will be informed of the progress;
- The budget for the M&E; and
- Which funding source will be used to finance the information gathering (if necessary).

Keys to effective participatory monitoring

Have straightforward
- forms,
- mechanisms, and
- reports

that are regularly updated and easy for the community to understand.

Example:

Form for Participatory Monitoring			
Results chain	Indicators	Status now	Target for the period
Objectives (impacts):			
Outcomes (results):			
Outputs:			
Activities:			

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Discussion

The discussion can focus on what it means to apply the good practices in practice. The purpose of the discussion is to help the audience start thinking about the relevance of good practices and techniques to the circumstances of their communities, and what concrete actions they can take in applying the good practices. Potential topics to be discussed, depending on the availability of time include:

- What has worked in the past to communicate with community members, especially the most marginalized?

- What has been the challenges in consulting community members? What communication/consultation formats and techniques could be useful in addressing those challenges?

- What local development interventions could potentially lead to create or reinforce spatial segregation? Can any measures taken to prevent those interventions from creating or reinforcing spatial desegregation?

- Do you know of any good examples of resettlement activities that improved the living conditions of the resettled people?

- Do you know of any concrete examples of adverse effects of resettlement? What should have been done to mitigate those impacts?

- Do you know of any other good or bad practices that are worth sharing?

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