



ACTION RESEARCH

ALBANIAN NATIONAL REPORT

This report is published in the framework of the SEE regional project "Leaders - Young Roma in Action", financed by U.S. Department of State, managed by Save the Children Albania country office and implemented by the local partner Roma Active Albania.



Roma Active Albania (RAA) is a professional Roma NGO which works to promote human development of the Roma and Egyptian minorities as people that have value and needs equal opportunities. The vision of RAA is to contribute to empowering Roma people to come together in a grassroots Roma movement that will change position of Roma by fighting against exclusionary mechanisms.



Save the Children is the world's leading independent organisation for children. We work in 120 countries. We save children's lives; we fight for their rights; we help them fulfil their potential. Its vision is a world in which every child attains the right to survival, protection, development and participation.

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The data and opinions introduced in this report do not necessarily represent the opinion of Save the Children and Roma Active Albania.

**Action Research -
Albanian National Report**

**LYRA -
Leaders-Young Roma in Action**

March 2014



**Based on local researches conducted by the research teams set up in the framework of the project
“Leaders - Young Roma in Action”**

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Abbreviations

BH – Bosnia and Herzegovina

LYRA – Leaders-Young Roma in Action

NGO – Non-Governmental Organization

RAA – Roma Active Albania

RED – Regional Education Directorate

SC – Save the Children

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Acknowledgments

The Action Research National Report is a summary of local researches conducted by Roma and non-Roma young people in Fier region, in the towns of Pogradec and Korça. These local researches realized with the broad-based community participation, aimed at identifying Roma community issues in the project areas and to address them to the respective local government units.

The Action Research National Report is an outcome of the close cooperation between the organizations Roma Active Albania, Save the Children, Office in Albania and the external consultant, who have contributed not only to draft this report but also to every step completed for local researches, helping the groups of young leaders to draft and follow up the respective methodology.

We would like to extend our gratitude to all participants of research groups of young people from Roma and non-Roma communities, who have contributed to this report with their findings by ensuring active participation, involvement in the group meetings and in the project as a whole. The group of young people Alesion Çela, Altin Rushit, Andi Ymeri, Anxhela Buzi, Anxhela Nofulla, Anjeza Kazanxhiu, Ardit Kasmollari, Ardita Çela, Armand Isuf, Asije Ali, Blerta Uthulla, Danjel Hyseni, Denada Koci, Denisa Trimi, Dorina Hajdinllari, Eglantin Aliko, Eneo Metani, Erion Kullozi, Erald Rushit, Erisa Kazanxhiu, Ervin Sinani, Floresha Ali, Kristi Mejdani, Kristi Kosina, Makelian Haxhij, Mariglen Bino, Mateo Muhaxhiri, Mikelian Selimaj, Nebi Kazanxhiu, Renart Koci, Romina Lutaj, Rudina Kiptiu, Xhuljano Tifi, has to be specially commended for the work done during the whole process under the Action Research process and more specifically, data collection , analysis and processing until the formulation of the respective reports.

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Foreword

Helen I'Anson, Country Director of Save the Children Albania Country Office

The Roma Community remains one of the most vulnerable groups in the region. They face many challenges that make difficult their social and economic integration. There is officially no distinction in access to rights for Roma, however there is differentiation in practice. The Roma communities face widespread poverty, socioeconomic marginalization and frequent discrimination, particularly regarding access to education, social protection, health, employment and adequate housing.

On a daily basis Save the Children sees Roma children not attending school, on the street, we hear about them not being able to access health care services, Roma parents not knowing how to navigate the social system or what they are entitled to. Young people from the community tell us how hopeless they feel about their future and the chances of earning a decent living or having meaningful opportunities to contribute to community and society.

This is a huge challenge for all of us. Save the Children has been working with Roma and Egyptian children for about 10 years, mainly focusing on ensuring access to education, social, health and other public services.

Leaders – Young Roma in Action (LYRA) project, one of the project we have been implementing during this period, is the first initiative of this kind in Albania that brings together Roma and non-Roma youth from the Region with the aim to empower them to identify common problems of exclusion and discrimination the Roma face, and to design and implement viable advocacy actions to address those problems through cross-border exchange and networking, engagement in civil society organizations and advocacy with national state bodies and international mechanisms dealing with Roma issues.

LYRA uses innovative participatory methodologies, emphasizing sustainability through capacity building, partnerships at regional, national and local levels, and youth empowerment. LYRA will help the next generation of Roma leaders claim and exercise their rights as equal citizens in their countries, and will build relationships between Roma and non-Roma youth and communities, key to reducing current stigma and discrimination

The present action research report, the first of its kind in Albania enables identification of common local and national Roma issues of regional importance generating comparative information for effective joint programming and advocacy, and allowing Roma youth leaders to bring these issues to the agenda of national, regional and international Roma-focused agencies.

Roma and non Roma young leaders had the opportunity to come together, share experiences and learn through collective reflection and analysis. This process offered young leaders opportunities to learn more about their communities and specific problems they are encountering. Through this process they develop their critical thinking skills, evaluate and reflect on their experience. Young leaders who conducted researches also gained and improved interviewing skills and knowledge on data analysis.

I encourage Young leaders to continue show their new, vibrant and challenging ideas for Albania. It is crucial for Young leader to continue empower and develop their capacities and competences to take effective actions, at local, national and regional level for improving social inclusion, non-discrimination and protection of the Roma. It will help the next generation of Roma leaders claim and exercise their rights as equal citizens in their countries, and will build relationships between Roma and non – Roma communities, key to reducing current stigma and discrimination.

Save the Children has been successfully cooperating and collaborating with Roma Active Albania (RAA) throughout the project implementing period. This collaborative relationship is considered a crucial element for the success of this initiative. The RAA Project Team has been very committed and willing to collaborate with Save the Children staff, understanding clearly what each partner brings to the table and expects from the partnership. The good communication, trust and mutual respect between two parties have been present during the whole project implementation period. Save the Children and RAA have worked cooperatively, build upon mutual interests, and share resources to work toward shared objectives to accomplish work.

I encourage Roma Active Albania to continue their successful engagement in effective joint programming and advocacy, bringing Roma concerned issues to the agenda of national, regional and international Roma focused agencies.

Summary

LYRA project has employed comprehensive methodologies, placing the focus on sustainability between the capacity building, cooperation at local and regional level and youth empowerment. LYRA has helped the young people exercise for seeking their rights as equal citizens and build relations between Roma and non-Roma young people from different communities. Identification of issues that mostly concern the communities and Roma young people at local and national level, has generated comparative data on the design of effective programs that will enable Roma young people bring their own findings to the attention of state structures and other national and international agencies.

The main purpose of the National Report of Action Research was to identify the issues of concern and priorities from the youth perspective, and show how the phenomena of social exclusion, discrimination, isolation, non-participation, non-cooperation, lack of access to services etc, are locally reflected in the districts of Fieri, Pogradec and Korça.

This report presents a summary of the results of local Action Researches in 5 communities. Those were based on the Action Research method¹ conducted by five teams in a group of 25 young Roma and non-Roma, and also involving other youngsters in different stages of the work, increasing their total number in 33. In all communities, the youth groups were established through a selection process based on all the criteria to be met to carry out the activities planned under the project. The research issue, methodology and work plan were also

For the first time, Roma Active Albania and Save the Children are supporting such a research organised by youth, in order to reach a comprehensive picture in addressing problems that concern the community, by mass inclusion of community members in the process through an Action Research.

Action research involves the process of actively participating to change a situation while conducting research and addressing relevant issues for the people involved in the research as co-researchers.

¹ Action research is a method of participatory involvement, where various groups can be organized together to share experiences and learn through reflection and collective analysis. It involves the use of a cycle of planning, action, observation, assessment (including self-evaluation) and critical reflection before further steps are planned. The method is commonly used, and has resulted in success, with Roma communities across Europe, for example in the UK on Empowerment of Roma (2009), Bulgaria on segregation of Roma ghettos (2011), Montenegro and Serbia on access of Roma to education (2010) and in Italy on segregation of housing (2008).

consulted with all the youth groups. Multiple techniques are applied in conformity with Action Research methodology; to collect information from a higher number of sources, also being advised with important reporters, including children and youth. In total, the process included 15 interviews, 6 focus groups, 222 application forms completed, and one photo assembly.

Youth groups reiterated that it is difficult for Roma community to be integrated in the labour market and it is usually engaged in informal employment, such as waste recycling, self-employment in trade, agriculture, etc, which is closely linked with hard economic conditions, low interest and possibilities to attend schools, etc.²

At local level, a Coordinated Committee is established on Programming, Evaluation, and Coordination of Social Protection at the District Council level. A technical Group is also established on Roma issues, composed of representatives from all administrative units with Roma inhabitants, representatives of Regional Departments subordinate to the Central Government, Roma NGO-s



Photo: The participants in the regional training "Steps toward empowerment", on Action Research methods.

² http://www.romadecade.org/cms/upload/file/9270_file1_al_civil-society-monitoring-report_al.pdf

representatives, and other non-Roma local NGO-s Representatives. All above institutional structures at local level are more involved in the coordination of activities for the solution of the Roma issues on a case by case basis than in the policy formulation, evaluation and monitoring.³

They reached the conclusion that discrimination, avoidance and exclusion are three problems to be urgently addressed both by the state structures and services, and also by the programs and projects of civil society.

Their work revealed that young Roma do not participate in the decision making process at policy-making level and beyond, while they addressed issues that need support from local and central government. They also noted that separate local statistic data on Roma community are completely missing and the existing data are often contradictory.

Young Roma groups cooperated and took concrete steps to establish links of cooperation between the community they represented and related local government officials. Roma and non-Roma youth engaged in research have done an excellent job for the promotion of the initiative of addressing issues of concern of their communities to the local authorities.

Central and local institutions should be meaningful when they formulate policies and undertake programs and initiatives concerning youth communities. They should place at the centre of interest not only the level of their prosperity, but they should also consider their full participation in the planning process, decision making and implementation.

The topics that the youth address and raise in this study, emphasize that social discrimination, isolation and exclusion are three key problems to be urgently addressed by both state structures and services, but also by programs and projects of civil society.

³ http://www.romadecade.org/cms/upload/file/9270_file1_al_civil-society-monitoring-report_al.pdf

Another recommendation stemming from the Action Research is the establishment of a specific board composed by representatives of parents of the schools. The board of parents will support the development of strategies and solutions of the problems closely linked with the pupils of the schools and broader.

After the conclusion of Action Research the youngsters engaged in research will work in cooperation with their communities on planning and implementation of the actions addressing issues linked with Roma discrimination and exclusion.



Photo: During the regional training "Steps toward empowerment", on Action Research methods.

I. Introduction

Roma people live in Albania for more than 600 years. They are settled in Albania before the ottoman occupation. According to research and based on some assumptions they have come from India, then through the Balkans they are directed to Europe. Their origin is known not because of the exact historic evidence, but mainly because of linguistic analysis. Roma communities live almost in all areas of Albania, but they are mostly settled in central and south-eastern part of the country and in the large cities, mainly in separate groups in suburbs areas of cities and their respective villages. They are grouped in four big Roma groups - Meckars, Kurtofs, Kabuzis and Cergars.⁴

Because of lack of proper education and qualification and discrimination, their position in the society is further aggravated since the collapse of the communist regime. As a result of poverty, with some minor exceptions, the new generation of Roma children has not been able to attend schools and is used as a labor force by their families. Some Roma children work as beggars in the streets and are victims of various illegal trafficking and prostitution. Today, the economic situation of Roma population in Albania and their living conditions are in very poor levels, because their unemployment is pretty lower than other parts of Albanian population. The health and housing conditions are also very poor.

Existing studies also stated that the Roma minority participation in decision and policy is low. Various reports emphasize the importance of community-level discussion of strategic documents state and priority measures through regional round tables with the participation of Roma community leaders and representatives of local Roma NGOs. Roma participation is first and foremost basic programming and progress monitoring measures at the community level. Consequently, it is recommended that NGOs (including Roma NGOs) and governmental institutions should consider actions that promote dialogue at the local level and make their activities available to the critical evaluation of potential beneficiaries.

⁴ http://www.romadecade.org/cms/upload/file/9270_file1_al_civil-society-monitoring-report_al.pdf

I.1 Selection of young people

The research previously undertaken in the framework of LYRA project in Albania is accomplished with the engagement of youngsters from Fier, Pogradec and Korça regions, who were selected by a joint committee of RAA and SC, based on the criteria previously established by this committee.

In the region, Roma populations do not generally live in technically specified rural areas, however, many of them live in communities considered “not-urbanized”, including the informal areas in city’ suburbs. RAA and SC have however ensured their active engagement in the selection of two urban and non-urban communities. Based on regional standard criteria identified during the initial phase, SC and RAA recruited 60 Roma and non-Roma youngsters from the focus groups, which actively participated in the project of local, national and regional activities. Community meetings and contacts with Roma civil society in each community were established in order to deliver the right information on the project and related calls for application. One of the lessons learned from the past programs for SC and RAA was that a mix of participation of Roma and non-Roma youngsters have grown the mutual understanding between these two groups and contributed to break up the old stereotypes and prejudices against the Roma population. This approach has facilitated the solution of the problems by increasing the peaceful cooperation and coexistence among various groups within the same community.

On May 01, 2013, through a selection process are selected around 25 new leaders (11 persons from Fieri, 8 from Korça, and 6 from Pogradec), to be included in the project as future leaders. The application form was prepared in Albanian language based on criteria established during the meeting of the RAA and SC Committee, in April. The application form provided information on the place of living the applicants, the age, the gender and the level of education and language skills. Personal skills of Roma language was one of the direct questions of the application form in order to evaluate the connection of the applicant with the community they lived. Other criteria were related to: engagement of the youth in social society activities, the interest they had to be involved in the LYRA project and their personal concept scheme for the exchange of information with the others. The gender equality and ethnic origin were two of the criteria to be kept in balance and respected during the group selection process.

At the beginning of the process, the participants of the research groups expressed their readiness and engagement for the continuity of the implementation of the research on the ground. The composition of the research groups experienced also some changes as a result of the engagement and the involvement of the youth in the project and other activities. Other non-Roma youngsters expressed their will and interest to become part of this project and become members of the youth group.



Photo: Informative meetings for the starting of LYRA project

By the end of May 2013 informative meetings are held among RAA, SC and youngsters. Several visits are conducted in predefined areas and application forms and information on main purpose and goals of the project were discussed. Meetings with youngsters were also held to promote a positive climate of good understanding and cooperation in support of their interests. The youngsters are informed during the meeting on the schedule of activities and other information linked with the school and their engagements. The relations with youngsters at the local level was ensured and further developed through meetings and frequent e-mail communication, social media and telephone. Also, youngsters from Fieri, Korça and Pogradec participated in the activity hosted by RAA office where they took more information about the project.

65 application forms are completed in three districts of Fier, Korça and Pogradec. The application forms provided information about the profile of the potential participants in the first training event and for the follow-on activities. Interest was shown even by the youngsters who did not meet the age criteria.

Table 1: Number of applications selected beforehand

Areas/cities	Number of applications	Number of young people selected from the beginning
Fier (Baltëz, Roskovec, Levan)	33	11
Korça	17	8
Pogradec	15	6
Total	65	25

In Korça, the youth group of leaders consisted of 8 youngsters. They demonstrated cooperative skills and team work spirit during the meetings. In Pogradec, the youth group consisted of 6 youngsters who showed interest and shared views on engagement of youngsters with the street groups of youngsters for the conduct of the Action Research. In Fier, 11 youngsters, formed three research groups located in three different areas, Levan, Baltëz and Rroskovec.

I.2 Training events and support offered to youth groups

In the preliminary phase of the Action Research, the young leaders involved in the process had the opportunity to be trained on participatory research through a 5-day training "Steps towards empowerment" held in Tirana, which brought young people from the region where LYRA project was implemented.

The training event was focused on the subject of the Action Research and strengthened practical skills on how to conduct an Action Research at local level, skills that were transferred also to other youngsters who were involved in the implementation of the research. For this reason, other 2 days workshops are conducted with the subject "Research based on community" in the three districts of Fier, Korça and Pogradec. The participants of these training events were provided with the basic

knowledge and skills on the Action Research methods, while youth had begun research through mapping, which was perceived more as a geographic map than as an overview of information. Later, when training working groups was made possible a clearer understanding of this concept and further improvement of those mappings, by providing data on specific situations and factors that may have contributed to these situations.

The young leaders have also participated in the National Conference conducted in Gjirokastra, where RAA presented the findings from the research on the Action Plan of the Roma Decade. The Roma youth participants in this conference learned more about the practical methods on monitoring activities, research methods, and the practical use of methodologies explored by them previously, such as observations, interviews and focus groups.

In order to assist the young leaders, RAA contracted a national consultant for Action Research at the beginning of November 2013, this as a need to support and promote by theoretical and practical knowledge every step of the implementation of participatory research for each group of young leaders. It was also decided that the consultant will be involved not only in the national report writing research, but also in supporting local writing reports. The consultant provided assistance and facilitated in the implementation of goals linked with Action Research of the youngsters, leading the efforts of the youth groups to define the right methodology, formulation of appropriate mechanisms, the methods of data collection, and their further analysis.

The external consultant, in cooperation with Roma and non-Roma youth community, the RAA and SC staff, have then formulated the methodology, the structure of the national and local research report, which was shared with other regional countries include in the project, as a standard example of all national and local reports, recognized under the LYRA project framework.

Groups of young Roma and non-Roma with the help of the consultant prepared a working draft that they would follow. The plan was specific to each group and previously consulted with all group members on issues of their interest for the follow-on training events and the methodology used in the previous months. Ten meeting were held with the young groups based on an agenda where all groups were given enough time to exactly follow the methodology agreed in cooperation with all members of the project.

II. Context

‘Save the Children’ and ‘Roma Active Albania’ during the period April 2013 – February 2015, are implementing the project “Young Roma Leaders in Action (LYRA)”. This is a regional project which implemented in Albania, Kosovo and Bosnia Herzegovina, funded by US State Department which aim is to strengthen and develop capacities and competences of Roma and non-Roma young leaders and activists, to undertake effective actions at local level, to solve important issues in daily life. The regional project has the focus on 10 communities in three countries of the Western Balkans, namely: Albania (Korça, Fier and Pogradec), Bosnia-Herzegovina (Sarajevo, Banja Luka, Tuzla, Bijeljina and Mostar), and Kosovo (Prizren and Gjakovë). The project included 60 young Roma and non-Roma leaders, out of them 25 were from Albania (18 Roma and 7 non-Roma), 15 were from Bosnia-Herzegovina, and 20 were from Kosovo (15 young Roma and 5 non-Roma), from 18 to 26 years old, who benefitted from this project.

An important goal of the project “Young Roma Leaders in Action” – LYRA was the increase of capacity of young Roma and non-Roma people to identify through the research in the community, issues of interests to be addressed and managed to reduce the discrimination and social exclusion against the Roma. The aim of the project was the promotion of the actions of the young Roma themselves based on the data collected during the research period at local level, in order to bring positive changes to the life of their communities.

Research studies on Roma communities⁵ have shown that Roma population is facing a lot of difficulties, such as social problems especially of economic nature. Many of them work in informal jobs and for short periods of time. Roma communities have mostly a low level of attendance in the education system, they usually attend elementary schools and then leave the schools, which is the main cause of their lack of skills in the labour market. Roma families usually work on trash recycling. Young Roma are little informed on their rights and protection of their rights. Many of them are little aware even on the concept of discrimination and social exclusion⁶. Considering the results of the various research studies and the experience of the representatives of Roma communities, young Roma have more opportunities through this project to become well-informed and skilled representatives in order to ensure their inclusion in social life in an organized way.

⁵ United Nations Albania – Study on evaluation of needs of Roma and Egyptian community in Albania, Tirana, 2012

⁶ United Nations Albania - Study on evaluation of needs of Roma and Egyptian community in Albania, Tirana, 2012

III. Mapping and selection of the research subjects

LYRA project is extended in several communities of Albania, such as Korça, Fier, and Pogradec, having in mind that the Roma community has a wider representation in these districts. The districts of Pogradec and Korça are not previously involved in other projects with young Roma communities. District of Fier has a large number of Roma communities settled in areas such as Mbrostar, Sektor, Levan, Baltëz, Rroskovec, Drizë etc. Out of these areas, three communities are selected, namely Levan, Baltëz and Rroskovec.



Photo: Working moments – Mapping of Pogradec

III.1 Characteristics of 5 communities involved in Action Research

Pogradec

Pogradec is a city in the south-eastern Albania, situated in the southwest of Ohrid Lake. It has some 38 thousands inhabitants. There are some 167 Roma families living in Pogradec.⁷ Some 40 Roma children attend the nine- year elementary school, 14 Roma pupils are in the high school and 5 in university. Pogradec has 5 schools of 9-year system, 2 high schools and 1 professional school. It is part of Korça district. The city area covers some 13 km². Roma population of the city of Pogradec is 377, out of which 99 are from 6 to 18 years old.⁸ Young Roma have a priority the subject “Segregation and discrimination of 9-year elementary school “Kozma Gjok Basho” as a Roma school”. Intentional Leaving of school because it is named as a Roma school is identified by the youngsters through an examination long term process.

Levan, Fier

The Levan commune is a large commune of 5000 inhabitants. Roma community is one of the most vulnerable and marginalized groups of Fieri District, and more specifically of Levan commune. The total number of Roma community based on data collected by Roma and non-Roma youngsters is about 2500 people. By the statistics of the mapping conducted UNICEF, 2011, this number is around 840 members of the Roma community. According to the statistics, 311 children and youngsters of the Roma community are not registered in kindergartens, compulsory schools, and high schools and only 143 are registered. The number of children to attend the compulsory education is higher in this commune. Roma youngsters of this community have identified a phenomenon with great impact on their prosperous growth and development: intentional leaving of schools or non-registration. This is the reason that the youngsters have chosen the subject “to understand real reasons of leaving the nine- year compulsory schools”, in order to collect more information related to real causes of leaving schools and ways to handle this problem.

⁷ UNICEF - Social Inclusion Data for children in Albania

<http://www.sidalbania.org/romamap.php?lang=en&pg=romabyregion&m=vieë®=Pogradec>

⁸UNICEF - Social Inclusion Data for children in Albania

<http://www.sidalbania.org/romamap.php?lang=en&pg=romabyregion&m=vieë®=Pogradec>

Baltëz, Fier

Dërmënas Commune, having as centre the village Dërmënas, is an administrative unit of Fier District. Dërmënas Commune includes inside the administrative unit some 12 villages: Muçaj, Baltëz, Hamil, Sulaj, Radostinë, Dërmënas, Havaleas, Pojan, Kryegjatë, Hoxharë, Povelçe and Darzezë. Dërmënas commune has a population of 12500 inhabitants, out of which 300 are Roma or non-Roma youngsters, only in the Baltëz village. In total, Roma children attending the nine- year elementary school are 99 (UNICEF, 2011). One of the concerns of youngsters of Baltez commune in Fier is linked with the lack of possibility of public transportation for various purposes, and as such their favorite subject was “Lack of public transport and the effects on the youngsters’ education and employment”.

Rroskovec, Fier

Rroskovec has a population of 8700 inhabitants, where 157 inhabitants⁹ belong to Roma community.¹⁰ Main sources of incomes for Roma families are related to agriculture, music, selling second hand clothes, trash recycling and metal selling. 10 % of Roma families are migrated to Greece during the transition period. Youngsters of the Rroskovec town are frequently faced with the lack of facilities for education and entertainment. With this in mind, they have expressed to each other the initiative of lobbying for a centre or recreation facility for their activities. Their favourite subject was “Creation of recreation centre for youngsters”.

Korça

According to INSTAT website data, the census of 2011 results that Korça district has a population of some 90.000 inhabitants, and more specifically, the number of Korça youngsters from 15 to 29 years old is 18.575. The challenges the youngsters are facing today are mainly those related to: employment, education, housing, criminality, discrimination, lack of cultural and sport activities, non-inclusion of youngsters in decision making, corruption, infrastructure, etc. “Participation of Roma youngsters in decision making”, is the favorite subject of youngsters in order to discover how much are the Roma and non-Roma youngsters engaged in decision making activities for the benefits of the citizens and their prosperity.

⁹ UNICEF - Social Inclusion Data for children in Albania

<http://www.sidalbania.org/romamap.php?lang=en&pg=romabyregion&m=vieë®=Pogradec>

¹⁰ Data provided by youth group of Rroskovec at the Municipality.

IV. Aim and objectives

The aim of the Action Research National Report isto identify the problematic issues and priorities from the youth viewpoints, and show how the phenomena of social exclusion, discrimination, isolation, non-participation, non-cooperation, lack of access to services etc, are reflected at the local level in the districts of Fieri, Pogradec and Korça.

Youth groups have given their contribution in each of the planning steps of the action they have made, and as a consequence, this report is a reflection of all their challenges, achievements, and expectations, related to the difficulties of their living communities.

Objectives

- Formulate consolidated statement of findings of local reports and try to group them based on specific areas.
- Enable Roma youngsters to identify key issues to be handled by themselves through community research methods, in order to bring positive changes to their communities.
- Consolidate young leaders and activists skills through increase of competences for finding efficient solutions of various local problems with an impact on improvement of their daily life.
- Promote Roma youngsters to become author of analysis and elaboration of problematic issues affecting their communities.
- Increase youngsters' awareness related to the management and organization of the team works.
- Assist the youngsters to build various forms on data collection (means) and their application for different social groups.
- Build new skills on ground research for youngsters by means of working plans based on real methodology for the identification of findings on issues of concern.
- Make sure that the voice of Roma youngster is heard and taken into consideration for the formulation of local and national, and action plans addressing Roma social exclusion and discrimination, through increase of participation of Roma youngsters into civil society and consolidation of junior advocacy.
- Create channels of communications using the youngsters as a linking bridge between the local government and the community.

V. Methodology

The selection of the methodology is one of the most specific issues of this report. It is based on mapping and Action Research, promoting the actions from the main actors responsible on the situation. In addition to the scientific aspect of the research, based on the principle of triangulation to collect exact information, it is based on a broader participation of the community, which directly proposes the measures to be taken for the improvement of the situation. As a consequence, the recommendations are conclusions of a synthesis of the quantity and quality of research data and proposals of the community.

The research subjects and the researchers are included in the reflection, learning and action process. The researchers are those bringing the change and who have the “power” to do that. The research is useful tool for the young Roma leaders to develop critical skills and apply those skills in practice. RAA and 33 Roma and non-Roma youngsters¹¹ under the supervision of the coordinator and assisted by the consultant have worked together on the development of methodology, data collection and analysis. In order to be effective in the leader building skills and apply their priorities in the research studies, a scheme was defined and all issues and steps to be followed were addressed as in the table 2. Also, an outline structure was defined on the final formulation of the Action Research report as a possibility of reference focus on the writing methods of the report, and all important elements of the Action Research report. (See annex 2).

The tools used for the data collection are: interviews, group focus, examinations, literature review, and photo collage.

The methodology is developed based upon the required scientific standards which the youngsters had the opportunity to be trained not only during the regional training on Action Research, but also during all the research process thanks to the constant assistance and support offered by the consultant, RAA and SC.

¹¹ List of Roma young leaders is available in the Annex I.

Table 2: Outline of respective methodology for each group

1. Design of basic study questions from the group with external facilitation (consultant or project staff) based on the project objectives, problems identified and the on-site situation
2. Drafting of questionnaires (forms of questionnaires to be prepared with young people during the meeting/s)
3. Structured and non-structured interviews
4. Focus groups with young people and community members
5. Reading or consultancy of the potential documentation, subject to the selected topic
6. Photo session (Pogradec)
7. Sharing of tasks, responsibilities and definition of timelines
8. Data elaboration, identification of findings, difficulties etc
9. Design of report draft
10. Sharing of the report findings (draft) with the young people or interested groups
11. Report finalization

V. I Methodology development

Continuous training and advice is provided for young leaders, both in the preparatory research phases and during the research process, based on the participatory approach of the youngsters. Participatory approach includes:

- engagement of the youngsters and the community in all the research steps,
- special attention paid to the research aiming at the stimulation of practical actions,
- providing youngsters with skills for data collection and decision for follow-on actions,
- establish good relation between the persons conducting the research and the research subjects,
- research is led by persons interested in the project outcomes,
- cooperation is key for all steps taken including the discussion and common work,
- full engagement and exercise of the responsibilities from all youngsters involved,
- result of the project is a concrete action, a change or an improvement of the situation compared with the previous one on issues concerning the community.

V.2 Instruments applied by the groups of young people for each realized Action Research:

Table 3: Number of measuring instruments for each group

Areas/towns	Interviews	Questionnaire	Focus group	Photo sessions
Pogradec	5	30	1	1
Korçë	6	80	-	-
Fier/Levan	3	30	2	-
Fier/Baltëz	-	52	2	-
Fier/Rroskovec	1	30	1	-
Total	15	222	6	1

Groups of young people have selected a list with topics, focus of their Action Research previously discussed in various training sessions within the framework of LYRA project and during discussions in the local workshops organized with the young people in August-September 2013.

Table 4: Number of meetings with Roma and non-Roma young people as per the research areas.

Group of young people	Number of young people	November	December
Pogradec	5	1	1
Korçë	7	1	1
Fier/Levan	6	2	
Fier/Baltëz	10	2	
Fier/Rroskovec	4	2	
Total	32	8	2

Issues chosen to be addressed by the young people are as follows:

Table 5: Topics chosen by the groups of young people

- **Pogradec:** Segregation and discrimination/labeling of the nine-year secondary school “Kozma Gjok Basho” as a Roma school.
- **Levan, Fier:** To understand the real causes of the abandonment of the nine-year education
- **Korça:** Representation of Roma Young People in the Decision-Making Process
- **Baltëz, Fier:** Lack of public transport affects the youth education and employment
- **Rroskovec:** Establishment of a youth center for the young people

VI. Summary of local researches

VI.1 Results of the Action Research in Pogradec

Title: “Segregation¹² and discrimination of 9-year school “Kozma Gjak Basho” as a Roma school”.

Period: The research is conducted from November 2013 – to December 2013

Research approach: 167 Roma families live in Pogradec¹³. Out of them, 40 Roma children are in 9-year schools, 14 Roma pupils are in the high school and 5 in university. Pogradec has 5 9-years schools, 2 high schools, and 1 professional school. Segregation and discrimination of the school “Kozma Gjak Basho” as a Roma school is a problematic issue concerning not only the Roma community but also the majority population. For this reason, many parents do not prefer to send their children in this school, while some others remove their children from this school. Roma community is more concerned of this problematic issue because it feels discriminated by the name of Roma school, which is in fact a segregation case, when only 10% of the pupils are of Roma origin. This fact is taken in consideration during the data collection and analysis. In addition to this problem, this school has other problems such as those related to school infrastructure facilities. Poor infrastructure facilities have created difficulties leading the children to intentionally leave this school. The young group decided to conduct a research on why the parents are transferring their children to other school, by means of interviews, questionnaires and focus groups.

Table 6: Number of Roma children enrolled at nine-year schools¹⁴

	Nine-year School “Kozma Gjak Basho”									
Gender/Class	Class 1	Class 2	Class 3	Class 4	Class 5	Class 6	Class 7	Class 8	Class 9	Total
Total	4	1	3	0	0	2	2	2	4	18

¹²Segregation – concept used to assist, to explain injustice, to limit chances and freedoms of people which do not belong a dominant group

¹³ UNICEF - Social Inclusion Data for children in Albania, 2011

<http://www.sidalbania.org/romamap.php?lang=en&pg=romabyregion&m=view®=Pogradec>

¹⁴UNICEF - Social Inclusion Data for children in Albania, 2011

<http://www.sidalbania.org/romamap.php?lang=en&pg=romabyregion&m=view®=Pogradec>

Methodology: In the first meeting with Roma young community in Pogradec we explained the information process of the aim of Action Research. The group showed high interest of cooperation as a work team and conduct a coordinated work focused on the raising the awareness on the issues of concern of their community. The group was undecided about the main goal of research focus. They discussed on various subjects and expressed their personal experience and activity on these issues. It was difficult for them to reach a conclusion on the most important issue even though the previous workshop training leaders had not definitely made a final decision on their community priorities.

The process for the formation of research structure and methodology has lasted 6 months, since young people were first trained in June 2013 until the methodology was finalized in November. In attending a number of trainings and workshops, each group became capable to understand and practice the knowledge acquired and to address topics of real concern for their communities. The interviews and questionnaires were developed by all members of the group and with the assistance of the consultant, and later the duties and responsibilities were shared for each group member.

Objectives

- Identifying some of the reasons that make the nine - year secondary school segregated;
- Understanding the potential reasons that have caused students having dropped out of school;
- Finding out some ways how to make students not to drop out of school;
- Making young people capable to address issues that concern the community where they live;
- Examining the reasons why investment has been lacked for a very long period of time, in this school;
- Making known some possible plans for investment by the local government, in this school.

Assumptions

- Labeling the nine-year secondary school "Kozma Gjok Basho" as a Roma school.
- Lack of a special infrastructure is a problem that affects not only the Roma and Egyptian community, but also the majority.

The methodology used for the data collection related to the research raised by the team of Pogradec has consisted as follows:

1. Questionnaire:

- A questionnaire for students who study at "Kozma Gjok Basho" school. This questionnaire has consisted of 10 questions developed for 20 students aged 11-14 years old. Students represented the three communities, the Roma, the Egyptian and the majority, including 10 females and 10 males. This tool concluded that most of the students had a very good relationship with the teachers. Students have admitted that the main reasons of conflicts were failure to accomplish the tasks assigned to them, and conflicts with their peers. Additionally, students have reported that teachers rarely make differences for students of different groups and they also reported that the rights are respected.
- A questionnaire with children who have dropped out of "Kozma Gjok Basho" school. This questionnaire contained seven questions, out of these one question was open. There were delivered 10 questionnaires, 5 questionnaires for women and 5 questionnaires for men. This questionnaire found that most of the children have dropped out of this school due to unfavorable conditions, not very good level of teaching and disagreements with teachers and their peers.
- A questionnaire for parents whose children study at "Kozma Gjok Basho" school. The questionnaires that were conducted in the city of Pogradec, with target groups the parents whose children studied at the nine-year secondary school "Kozma Gj. Basho", reported that the relationship between parents and teachers was good and there was no difference whether teachers were male or female.

2. Interview:

- Interview with the school principal of "Kozma Gjok Basho" school;
- Interview with specialists of education;
- Interview with specialists of the planning department;
- Interview with the head of the board of parents;
- Interview with parents whose children do not study at the nine-year secondary school "Kozma Gjok Basho".

3. Focus group

A focus group was organized with some young people who had been students of this school and were fully aware of the existing situation in "Kozma Gjok Basho" school. This focus group had the

objective to share experiences and recommendations of participants who have dropped out of the nine-year secondary school, subject matter of the research with each other.

4. Photography reportage

Photography reportage was prepared to demonstrate the conditions in the city's schools and to make the distinction between these schools and "Kozma Gjok Basho" school. It was found that conditions in other schools were much better than in "Kozma Gjok Basho" school. This tool was used only by the group of Pogradec, as a concrete tool to make the comparison by showing the photographs on the infrastructure of other schools in Pogradec.



Photo: Nine-year secondary school "Kozma Gjok Basho" compared with another secondary school "Koli Koci" – photos taken by the group of young people from Pogradec

Findings:

After the implementation and data collection via the above forms, the group of young people has managed to generate some results, which can serve as a reference for concrete recommendations. Recommendations can be properly addressed and convey the concerns and problems of the community in question.

- Students drop out of school due to poor conditions in school and in its facilities.
- In this school only 10% of students are Roma, whereas judgment exists because of the geographical position and lack of investment.

- The quality of teaching in this school does not change compared with other nine-year secondary schools.
- There has not been any investment for 40 years in the nine-year secondary school, despite the fact that there exists a project plan for its restructuring.
- Teachers have reported that discrimination existed previously at higher levels, but with the passing of the time there have been positive changes.
- The school board does not work.

Achievements:

- It is the first time for the Roma young people, part of the group, that are involved in a research work;
- Roma and non-Roma young people have become capable of working in group;
- Young people have become capable of being part of group dynamics, functioning within the group;
- Roma and non-Roma young people have become capable of undertaking other research initiatives,
- Problematic issues have been identified, and the data about the causes and consequences have been addressed and collected.

Challenges:

- Access to services or institutions to ask for information about the ongoing progress of this issue;
- Inability to conduct the interview with the board of parents in school, because this board has never been convened;
- Difficulties in research implementation steps, because not all young people of the group have previously participated in trainings organized in the framework of the project;
- Lack of previous experience;
- Technical difficulties faced for writing the Action Research report.
- A suitable premise where the group could be convened is lacked.

Recommendations:

- Improve the conditions in the school, in order to decrease the number of children who drop out of this school.
- Establish and operate the school board and encourage the participation of Roma parents.
- Organize comprehensive extracurricular and extramural activities, to address the issue of stereotypes and the name of this school.
- Broadly present and discuss the draft plan for this school.

Plans for the future

- The research team has determined that the following steps will be undertaken by them as plans:
- Lobbying, assisting the school to be frequented by all students, regardless of ethnicity, race, etc. Additionally, lobbying for the reconstruction and improvement of teaching conditions in institutions;
- To overcome challenges that they have encountered. This experience has served as a learning process for acquiring many new skills, and therefore facing the mentioned above with difficulty;
- Young people suggest as many trainings as possible, related to further enhancing their capacities in the area of research and addressing issues of interest;
- To advocate for solving the problem repeatedly addressed;

VI.2 Action Research results in Levan, Fier

Title: "Understanding the real reasons that have caused the dropping out of the nine-year education system in Levan commune, in Fier"

Period: The research about the dropping out of school was launched in November 2013 and was completed in December 2013.

Research approach: Roma and non-Roma young people in the district of Fier, in Levan commune, have conducted a research focusing on finding out the factors that affect the phenomenon of dropping out of school (compulsory education). Eleven Roma and non-Roma young adults who have dropped out of school at the age of childhood have expressed their desire to return to school, but the education system and schools have not allowed them. Given this concern with which they themselves have faced, the young people have undertaken a research in their community by interviewing teachers, education specialists and have created focus groups and organized meetings with prominent stakeholders to understand the **phenomenon** of dropping out of school, mainly by the Roma community. The group with the young people believes that education is the foundation of a civilized and integrated society.

Methodology: The group that consisted of Roma and non-Roma young people were provided with a scheme to monitor and implement the research in the field. Part of the methodology and implementation of the scheme constructed for research issue is the increase of capacity to work in group, to cooperate with various stakeholders and to recognize the techniques and ways of involvement of subjects in the research process. First it was identified the number of children who have dropped out of school, and this was made possible through the visits in 300 Roma families, and later questionnaires were delivered to the children. There were developed several focus groups with parents and children, and they discussed the causes of the dropout and the importance of education, while simultaneously sensitizing parents for the school. The Action Research interviewed several key stakeholders who directly or indirectly influence the education of the Roma and non-Roma children, such as parents, school principal of the nine - year secondary school "Dino Ismaili", teachers and an employee of RED (Regional Education Directorate).

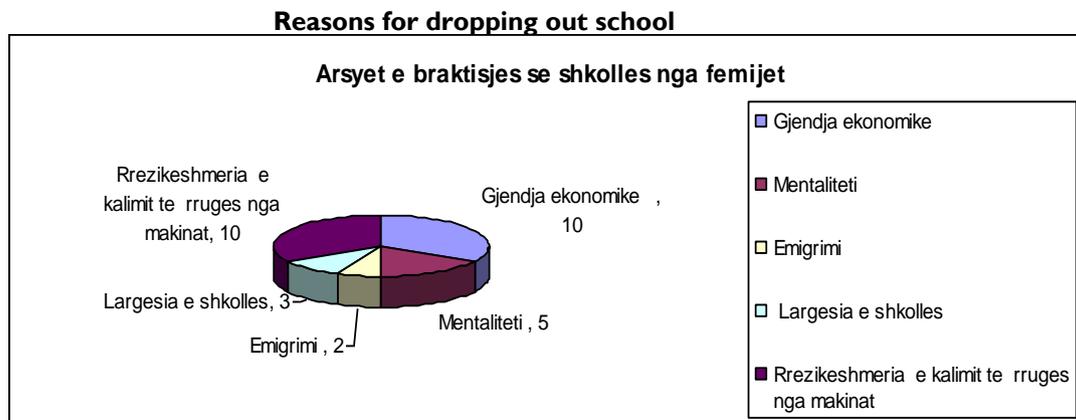
The methodology involves the use of the following forms of instruments:

- Field observations
- Questionnaire with children who have dropped out of school (56 children who have dropped out of school identified in the field by young people)
- Interview with the school principal of "Dino Ismaili" school
- Interviews with employees of the Regional Education Directorate
- Interviews with teachers
- Focus groups with parents and children
- Review of literature

Young people first did a research to understand this phenomenon and in order to get more closely to acquaint with the research they received information from communes about the number of people and the information needed about the population, mainly ethnic Roma. In absence of accurate statistics about the number of Roma children in Levan commune who have dropped out of school, the group of Roma and non-Roma young people found necessary to identify the number of students who have dropped out of school. The group composed of young people made an assessment in all Roma families located in Levan commune and found out that about 300 Roma families have family members who have dropped out of the primary school. In addition to the identification of the number of children who have dropped out of school, a number of meetings and focus groups were organized with parents and children.

Findings:

- Out of 300 families of Roma community that were visited door to door, it was found that 56 children have dropped out of school. They are 13-15 years old and are mostly female.
- Economic conditions, the risk of crossing the national highway which divides the town in between, as well as difficulties in academic progress are the main factors that affect the dropping out of school.
- Roma community in Levan has limited employment opportunities due to lack of professional qualifications and discrimination.
- Most members of the Roma community make the living by doing informal work.



Graph 1: Reasons of school drop-out by children

The graph shows that there are several reasons that make children drop out of school, but the difficult economic situation and the high risk that exists while crossing secondary roads are the two most common reasons reported by children. There are a number of reasons that cause the dropping out of school. Out of 30 questionnaires delivered, the answers given in the herein under table are the most frequent.

Table 7: Statistical distribution of the reasons reported by children

Nr	Reasons students drop out of school	Number of persons	In percentage
1	Economic situation	10	33.3%
2	Mentality	5	16.7%
3	Emigration	2	6.7%
4	Distance to school	3	10%
5	Risk of crossing the road due to vehicles	10	33.3%
	Total	30	100%

Additionally, about 50% of respondents reported that they wanted to return back to school.

Achievements:

Implementation of this research enabled the identification and understanding of factors that make students drop out of school. The group consisted of Roma and non-Roma young people has identified the number of children who have dropped out of the nine-year secondary school and has managed to implement the knowledge acquired during the number of trainings and workshops focused on interview techniques, focus groups etc.

- Discrimination manifested by the institutions that have the task of resolving the problems of this community in this commune.
- Living in neighborhoods segregated from the majority.
- Fifty six Roma children have dropped out of school for various reasons, as follows:
 - Economic conditions
 - Infrastructure
 - Mentality
 - Negligence of teachers and lack of assistance shown by them to help students after school lessons.

Challenges:

- The biggest challenge that was created with the identification of factors and which still exists is to minimize the dropout phenomenon and to return to school those children who have expressed their wish to continue the studies.
- To find the most interesting and special forms, in order to raise awareness and to convey the message that benefits can be achieved from attending school.

Recommendations:

- Provide support through supplementary classes for academic progress.
- Return students to school through programs for second chances.
- Improve infrastructure to make possible access of children to school.
- Sensitize parents about the values of education and school attendance and make teachers aware to not neglect children.

VI.3 Action Research results in Baltëz, Fier

Title: “Lack of public transport affects the education and employment of young people”

Period: The research covers the period November 2013 – December 2013

Research approach: Young people have reported some major problems that concern the residents of the village Baltëz, such as lack of public transportation, drinking water, garbage bins and road infrastructure. Consequently, 11 girls who attended vocational courses refused to work in Fier due to lack of public transport after 8 a.m. The same fact has affected students to attend school. The group with the young people decided to prepare a questionnaire to understand the extent of the spread of the problem and to organize focus groups to discuss options with significant stakeholders at institutional level, as well as with transportation companies.

Methodology: The issues reported by the group of young people have oriented their work in the selection of tools for data collection. Initiatives to address the issue of lack of public transport were born during the examination of the situation and the factors that affect the education of young people. Some of young women who had attended vocational courses had found a job after completing the course and were faced with difficulties to be provided with public transport, and therefore had been unable to start work. To collect more information about the above situation it was involved the focus group with women and a focus group with young people. The Mayor of Baltëz was interviewed and surveys were organized by young people.

The following techniques were used for data collection:

- Interview with the Head of Commune
- Focus groups: This process included all members of the community who are in contact with the phenomenon in question. During the process of Action Research there were created two focus groups:
 - The first meeting was held with the young people of this community
 - The second meeting was conducted with women and the nurse of the community

Questionnaire

The group with young people developed a questionnaire that was completed by members of the community of Baltéz commune. Fifty two persons (31 males and 21 females) have completed the questionnaire to gather information about the impact of the lack of public transport on young people.

Table 8: Public transport use during one month

Public transport frequency	Number of answers
1-5 times a month	6
6-10 times a month	26
11- or more times a month	20
Total	52



Photo: Moments of discussing and interpreting the results and findings of the Action Researches in the Fier region

Findings:

The data processed from the questionnaires found that the lack of public transport has high impact in every area of life, and the highest percentage was given to health, education problems, and other needs. Given that health centers are located far from residences, most of the community considers urban transportation as an indispensable transport tool for various health services, especially in case of any emergency. Public transport also showed that it is necessary for students in school and for personal matters.

Additionally, the costs incurred for alternative transport are significant compared with the modest income of residents. More than 53.90 % of respondents reported that they spent more than 2,000 ALL per month to move for various reasons from the village to the city and mainly this figure was reported by the young people who attended school. More than 90 % of respondents stated that they were happier to have a mean of urban transportation at least once in two hours. The need for the use of this service is required at least every two hours.

Table 9: Preferred time schedule for the public transport needs

<i>Public transport frequency</i>	<i>Number of answers</i>
Every two hours	44
Every three hours	4
Every four hours	4
Total	52

Achievements:

In this research the group has had the following achievements:

- Organized in the form of a group with a common mission, addressing the issue of public transport;
- Other problems that concern the daily life of community where they live have been identified;
- Young people have collaborated as a team, thus facilitating the work of each other;
- Skills have been developed to conduct a research in the ground, following all the steps and techniques (learned during training, consulting and workshops) of interviewing, administering of questionnaires, focus groups, and writing reports;
- Concerns of the community have been addressed to the local government.

Challenges:

Some of the Challenges faced by young people are listed as follows:

- Identification of key stakeholders who influence to resolve the issue
- Meeting with the Head of Commune
- Lack of quantitative and qualitative data about the commune and villages
- Data processing and interpretation

Recommendations:

- The commune should provide license for urban transport and service by public or private companies.
- The commune should provide transportation for the villages of the commune Dërmenas with the city of Fier, and also there must be at least one bus every two hours.
- The average monthly cost for a single person should not exceed 2000 in total.
- Transportation must provide space for the transport of goods from the villages to the city market.

Plans for the future:

The group of young people of Baltëz commune has expressed interest to continuously address issues of concern until the moment they will find solution, for the benefit of the whole community.

Since it was impossible to contact the mayor, the working group will continue its efforts to meet him and present the action research findings, trying to establish a sustainable relationship with the municipality. Also will be contacted the other key players in resolving this issue.

VI.4 Action Research results in Rroskovec, Fier

Title: “Establishing a youth center for young people”

Period: The research covers the period November 2013 – December 2013

Research approach: Except of problems such as unemployment, young people in Rroskovec are faced today with a total lack of spaces to provide social and recreational activities. Centers that offer counseling for career choice and job training are lacked. Young people who want to attend vocational courses and employment are disadvantaged due to the negligence of local government and not only. Roma youths who live in the city of Rroskovec are primarily engaged in the collection and recycling of materials to survive.

Methodology: The group with the young people decided that three of the instruments that would be used to achieve the objectives of the research were as follows:

- Focus group with 13 participants of different age groups
- Interview with the Mayor of Rroskovec
- Questionnaires with Roma and non - Roma young people (15 questionnaires filled out by Roma young people and 15 questionnaires by non - Roma young people aged 15-26 years).

Sampling was conducted on the basis of the principle of selection, taking into account stakeholders who are affected by the lack of a youth center and key stakeholders responsible for establishing such a center where Roma and non-Roma young people could have full access. Since the beginning, this research aimed at opening the center to develop inter alia social and recreational activities with a focus on the young people of the city.

Findings:

- Lack of a structure to meet the needs of young people in terms of vocational training, social, cultural and entertainment activities.
- All Roma and non-Roma young people expressed the need for such a facility.
- Previously there was not any youth organization to ask / address issues of interest to them.
- Municipality has stated that it welcomes proposals and initiatives of young people.

Achievements:

- Young people faced for the first time an initiative of such proportions, and this experience helped them develop the capacity, but also to be closer to the needs of the community where they live.
- In the interview conducted with the Mayor of Rroskovec the Mayor offered his support to provide some spaces in the premises of the Palace of Culture of Roskovec, to organize youth activities, versus a prior planning. Young people reported that the Mayor was enthusiastic and ready to welcome such projects, ideas and initiatives of the young people of the city. Consequently, for young people remains a challenge to design and plan the center's performance and activities to be developed in the future.
- Action Research of Roma and non-Roma young people provided information on the status and opportunities of education, vocational courses and employment, data that will serve and address the concerns but also preparing the plans of activities by young people, regarding the establishment of a youth center. It was drawn the attention of non-Roma young people and to ensure their support towards this initiative, helping to improve the image of Roma people by fighting stereotypes.

Challenges:

- The main challenge was the lack of a suitable place, with the base logistics, where young people can work independently to prepare the research.
- The use of computer skills and knowledge of computer programs and data processing were other challenges that young people faced during the implementation of the Action Research.
- Data collection and examination, interpretation and making recommendations were also strong challenges for the young people.
- The support provided by the Mayor puts young people facing a huge challenge, hence, planning to raise money from a genuine institution for young people.

Recommendations:

- Establish a joint working group, attached to the municipality, to develop and coordinate a plan of activities for the establishment and operation of a youth center, in view of the emerging themes in focus groups.
- Organize periodic focus groups as a guide on priorities and activities that the municipality could address related to the young people.
- Provide support to local businesses in improving the infrastructure of the Palace of Culture, to make it more functional for young people, providing basic equipment (a computer, chair, table, shelf, printer, Internet connection). These materials can be provided with the passing of time, by cooperating with private businesses or religious centers that provide assistance.

Plans for the future:

A plan to have concrete supporters for the establishment and operation of the centre will be prepared in the future, taking into consideration the support expressed by the Mayor during the interview with him, for the establishment of a youth center which needs intervention, mainly logistics.

VI.5 Action Research results in Korça

Title: “Representation of Roma young people in the decision making process”

Period: This research covers the period November 2013 to December 2013.

Research Approach: The representation of young people in the decision-making is one of the most meaningful indicators of civil development and civic education. Despite the fact that their role in economic and social development of the country is irreplaceable, young people today appear as an untapped asset as a result of the negligence shown by the central government and the local government. Research work by young people from Korça has identified problems that young people encounter today, such as: crime, drugs and alcohol, unemployment, lack of cultural and sports activities, failure to involve young people in the decision-making, etc. These findings were confirmed by the UNDP project that is being implemented in the city of Korça. Young people are those most affected by unemployment, different substances abuse, discrimination, poverty, etc. Lack of young people in the decision making and inability to representation affects their welfare and development. On the other hand, according to them, active participation in the decision making encourage and improve their professional skills, develop interests and make their voices heard.

Methodology: To achieve the objectives of research it has been used a methodology combined with direct, participatory and inclusive approach, in order to collect quantitative and qualitative data. This was accomplished through the use of two institutional tools, i.e., interviews and surveys. Surveys were conducted with persons belonging to different age groups of 15-50 years, including gender balance, Roma and non-Roma.

- Eighty respondents of 15-50 years old gave their contribution in identifying obstacles that young people encounter in the decision - making. Persons were selected randomly.
- Six representatives of local institutions and NGOs that operate in the city of Korça (chief administrator of the region, the Chairman of the City Council, the Mayor, the School Principal of the nine-year secondary school, the Chairman of the University Senate, and the MP of the district) underwent the process of interviewing. Institutions were selected by young people in the workshop developed, in the meetings with the consultant and the project coordinator.

In conclusion, young adults developed a material that consists of three main parts:

- Quantitative analysis based on statistical data derived from the survey results.
- Qualitative analysis about the problems young people face in the decision making process, through interviews.
- Recommendations for a preliminary number of measures that will improve the representation of young people in the decision-making process.

Findings:

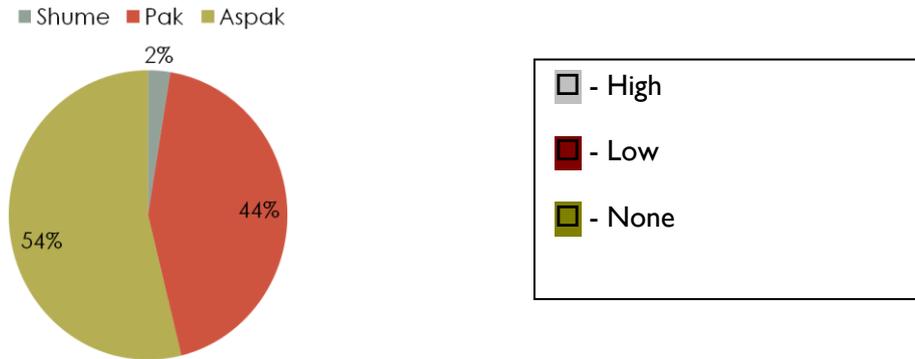
Young people of the group in Korça have processed the data collected from surveys and interviews. In connection with the statement “Inclusion of Roma young people in the decision making process”, 54% of the respondents answered that young people are not involved in the decision making process, and only 2% of the respondents said that more young people are involved in the decision - making process.

Inclusion of Roma young people was assessed through several questions related to the representation of young people in public and private institutions, and it was found that most of them had not been involved in institutions, and 59% of respondents answered that young people are not represented.

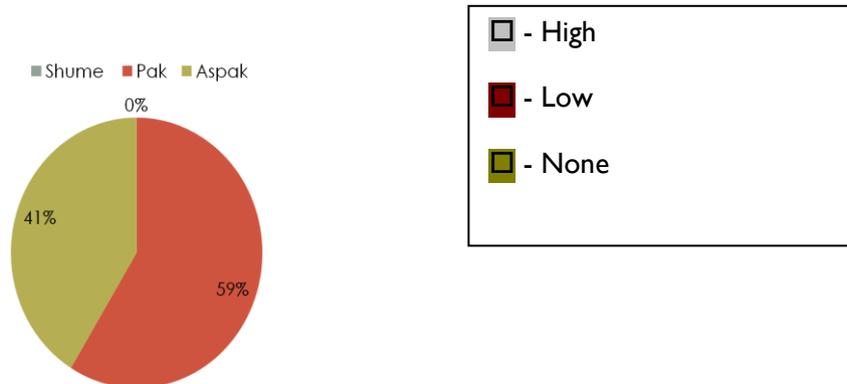
The interviews that were performed with representatives of the local government and NGOs to understand the inclusion of Roma community in different sectors resulted as follows:

- Roma young people have not been represented in decision-making, and they are not involved in institutions.
- Initiatives to give information about activities or events that take place in their communities are lacked.
- There is the office to support communities in need, but this office has not employed any representative from the Roma and Egyptian minorities.
- Lack of organization to address the problems of communities. They are often presented at the individual level.
- There are structures to coordinate actions and meetings with young people, but they are implemented at project level.

Graph 2: Involvement of young people in decision-making and institutions



Involvement of Roma young people in the decision-making



Challenges:

Lack of experience in the preparation of a scientific research and advocacy made that start of work for young people to be difficult. Cooperation in group, the responsibilities and rights of each member within the group were one of the challenges that characterized the group of Korça. Lack of physical space to organize meetings and to share experiences, somewhat hampered their research work. Lack of knowledge in using Microsoft Office package and Internet access overloaded their work. In many situations, young people faced the refusal of persons selected as important stakeholders.

Achievements:

Through their research work, young people have developed their skills and capabilities to identify problems encountered in their community. Several months of intensive work have taught them how to select appropriate research tools and the key players involved in the decision-making process. Teamwork, share of duties and responsibilities, as well as close cooperation with the community enabled these young people to properly address the issues currently faced by young people. Teamwork strengthened relationships between young people, thus mutually benefitting from each other's experiences.



Photo: View from the work during group meetings

Recommendations:

Despite the problems and challenges encountered throughout the research process, young people were able to develop, through their work, their skills and learn the steps that lead to a qualitative research work.

It is necessary to train the young people to develop their skills in terms of group collaboration, sharing of experiences, tasks and responsibilities within the group and improve their computer and research skills.

Some recommendations issued by young people:

- Representation of Roma community in the City Council must be encouraged.
- Roma and Egyptian young people should be encouraged and organized to participate in the meetings organized by the city council, even though they do not have the right to vote.
- Periodic meetings regarding the consultancy of municipal structures with young Roma & Egyptian.

Plans for the future:

Teamwork familiarized the young people with each other, therefore the young people suggested planning in the future the creation of a union with a group of students, who can acquire the support of the student council, to address and lobby issues of interest. Also the young group in Korça expressed the readiness and the interest to participate in similar projects in the future.

VII. Conclusions

VII.1 Findings

Action Research conducted by the young people of the city of Pogradec, Korça, Levan, Baltëz, Rroskovec communes, included the participation of 15 respondents, important actors in data collection, 222 individuals who completed a questionnaire and 6 focus groups were organized with children, youth, community members. In the end of the research, Roma and non-Roma young people reached some conclusions and achievements as follows:

- Young people of Roma community suffer from exclusion from education and avoidance from social and cultural life, as a result of lack of appropriate infrastructure.
- Young people have reported that at Roma communities and in different cities there are not organized recreational, educational and social activities, necessary to share experiences and knowledge;
- Employment remains one of the main concerns for Roma young people. They confirm that the Roma community is mainly involved in informal work such as recycling, self-employment in trade, agriculture etc.;
- There are ambiguities and inconsistencies in the data, about the exact number and location of the Roma people in Albania. Various reports given by different public or private institutions, including the 2011 Census, bring more confusion than the true number. This makes the job of the group of local research young people more difficult.
- In the administrative areas of Roma and Egyptian population, there is no exact number of Roma and Egyptian families registered, because ethnicity declaration is done on a voluntary basis;
- Public transport has high impact in every area of life and affects the movement of staff education, health service, human safety, trade, etc.;
- As an individual initiative for the movement, transport bears a higher cost than public transport, thus affecting the movement of citizens, attending vocational courses, schools etc.;

- Roma young people do not participate in the decision making process, at policy - making level and beyond;
- Meetings convened at the City Council are open to all citizens and therefore young people can participate in these meetings, but in many cases organization to address problems that arise in the community or at individual level is lacked and young people have shown little interest to participate in various decision-making processes;
- Roma community of Levan has limited employment opportunities due to the lack of professional qualifications and discrimination. Economic and social exclusion naturally affect the health of Roma community members.
- The dominant age of school drop outs is 13 to 15 years, and mainly girls. The main factors that affect students to drop out of school is the position / location of schools related to settlements and economic situation.
- Discrimination labeled as a phenomenon that has led to the dropping out of schools is not the dominant factor, but there are also other factors that influence students to drop out of school, such as infrastructure, teaching quality, etc.

VII.2 Achievements

Roma and non-Roma young people have been involved in addressing issues that concern the communities where they live. Searching and collecting the data, and analyzing and achieving the results were found productive in this initiative.

The work done by young people in Rroskovec, data collection and processing and lobbying with the responsible institutions have made possible for the Mayor of Rroskovec to express readiness to establish an area in the premises of the Palace of Culture of Rroskovec, available to organize youth activities under a preliminary planning.

VIII. Difficulties and Challenges

Detailed description of the difficulties encountered during the Action Research by young people:

- *Computer skills (computer literate):* Some of the young people in groups could use simple computer programs for entering and analyzing the data. The people who had more knowledge were also engaged to train other groups.
- *Access to computer:* Not all group members have had the opportunity of access to a computer. Materials were sent to those young people who have had the opportunity of access to a computer, teamwork.
- *Place of work:* Premises used by young people to work in group have been limited. There are often used libraries, cafes, etc.
- *Data collection and analysis:* Young people of the group were familiar with the tools that they were going to use for data measurement. Data analysis was assisted by the coordinator and the consultant.
- *Literature Review:* Use of different sources of information for the purpose of enriching the data about the object of the search has been conducted mainly by some young people who were familiar with this process.
- *Critical thinking in teamwork:* Discussion between young people, mainly those selected to address issues of concern in the community.
- *First experience in the field of research:* Some teenagers were very active and had previously faced research experiences and had participated in a number of trainings. These Roma and non-Roma young people have worked in working groups and helped other young people who have become part of the research for the first time.

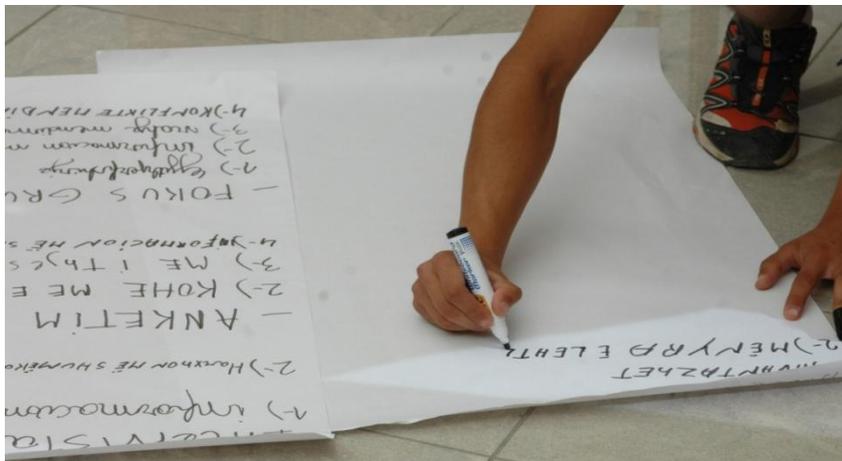


Photo: Working moments

IX. Lessons learned

Roma and non-Roma young people chosen to realize researches in the communities where they live have participated in various activities organized by the project, to acquire skills and to know in more detail the scope of research and the use of different measurements. Researchers have participated in the training conducted at national and international level with representatives from many communities. Additionally, participants have learned how to use the process of research and results as a tool to connect with different actors to change the situation. An important element acquired from the meeting was the expression of the initiative to be partner with other partner organizations in this initiative. All above mentioned skills were reported to have been implemented during the research work by young people.

The Action Research itself proved effective in civic engagement (with rights and responsibilities) of young people, and also for the concrete results of such research.

This methodology should be widely used in initiatives aimed at increasing access and participation of young people in community life and decision-making.

Preparation is essential for the process. Harmonization of methodologies, elaboration of questionnaires, determination of the focus of research and the ability to adaptation depending on the circumstances in the ground are all the criteria that were met by young people, so that data collection and processing could be successful.

Community participation and preparation significantly facilitated group activities. Groups of young people who have undertaken the research have clearly informed members of the community about the purpose and objectives of the research that they would undertake. Due to the dynamics and the need for development, it is necessary to continuously increase capacities in this area, because this can be affected neither by the up - to present trainings nor by education.

Methodologies and training materials that can be used, must be tailored to be understood and to be implemented by young people, without the need of a particular academic training on research methods. Examples, language and other specifications of materials, should be easy to reset the application, by anyone interested activist Pet undertake such a local initiative.

There should be provided much more information about the functioning of the local government and more simplified techniques to lobby with them. More frequent personal and group counselling provided by consultant for Action Research to young people.

X. Impact on young people and communities concerned

For several months, young people of five groups identified and then conducted a Action Research on issues that concern them and the community where they live. Notwithstanding that some of them did not know the steps and rules to be followed for conducting a qualitative research work, their dedication and continuous monitoring process led to the acquisition of skills and knowledge in setting goals and then meeting them. The entire process had a positive impact on the development of critical thinking and the development of the teamwork capacity.

Through the tools used, young people had the opportunity to work directly with the community and with all actors involved in the process and gave their contribution in resolving issues of concern.

Through the work they have accomplished, young people were able to recognize strengths, responsibilities, opportunities for further learning and facilities necessary to create partnership. After clearly identifying issues of concern for the community, they collected and interpreted the data and gave their recommendations to resolve the issues. Increase of capacities has enhanced the confidence of young people in articulating and addressing issues from a more positive outlook by the communities where they live.

Young people involved in the research have acquired the basic skills of work in the community and further improved teamwork skills.

XI. Recommendations

XI.1 Issues raised at national/local level

The following recommendations can be addressed at central government level:

- Formulate and find tools for the implementation of policies addressing Roma or non-Roma youngsters' needs.
- Engage youngsters in initiatives with a direct impact in them and involve them directly in the decision making process.
- Ensure appropriate tools for the youth participation in the activities with focus on building the capacity skills.
- Promote initiatives to reduce discrimination through awareness, education, and lobbying for the respect of human rights.

As regards the local government level, the young people have given the following recommendations:

- Provide the necessary tools for the promotion of cooperation among the youngsters and the central/ local government.
- Provide youngsters with necessary physical facilities and offer them training on team work with the division of responsibilities in a common work environment.
- Provide youngsters with the necessary infrastructure facility to share experience and positive role models.

XI.2 On young people and their work

- Through Action Research in the framework of the project, the young people displayed very good organizational and teamwork skills. Consequently, it is suggested that in the future young people should define the fields of research and their priorities, including not only members from their community but also other key stakeholders in the process of addressing and resolving their concerns.
- Young people should lobby to have more promotional policies for themselves.
- Young people should lobby to publicly address their concerns.

- Groups have done a very good work in the community. It is recommended that relations built with the community and institutions serve as a model for coping with similar problems even in the future.
- It is necessary that young people should be continuously monitored to check the group progress.
- It is necessary that young people are properly trained regarding the literature review and use of technology supporting the work they do.
- Young people should not only file complaints against discrimination cases but should also serve as source persons in the community to help others follow that procedure.

XI.3 Follow-up/lobbying and further advocacy

- Roma and non-Roma young people must be invited to introduce the issue addressed, to share it with other groups and receive recommendations for the further lobbying and advocacy of the case.
- Roma and non-Roma young people will be assisted from RAA and SC to introduce the findings, recommendations and results of their research work to the national stakeholders.
- Efforts will be made to channel the local advocacy messages through national mechanisms such as the Ombudsman/People's Advocate and other institutions at national level. Due to media involvement, the recommendations of young people will be introduced and be taken into account for the formulation of national policies.
- Roma young people will be invited to be part of technical round tables and national events focused on discrimination and integration issues.

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2. UNICEF - Social Inclusion Data for children in Albania
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Annexes

Annex I: List of research teams

List of persons involved in the research projects as per the project areas

Rroskovec

Makelian Haxhiaj
Rudina Kiptiu
Denada Koci
Xhuljo Tifi

Levan

Edison Cela
Ardita Cela
Eneo Metani
Mikelian Selimaj
Andi Ymeri
Anxhela Buzi

Baltëz

Blerta Uthulla
Anxhela Buzi
Renart Koci
Denada Koci
Denisa Trimi
Erisa Kazanxhiu
Anjeza Kazanxhiu
Nebi Kazanxhiu
Xhuljo Tifi
Andi Ymeri

Korça

Danjel Hyseni
Kristi Mejdani
Egli Aliko
Mariglen Bino
Erion Kullozi
Ervin Sinani
Dorina Hajdinllari

Pogradec

Asije Ali
Flora Ali
Erald Rushiti
Anxhela Nofulla
Ardit Kasmollari

Annex 2: Report outline

Report writing outline from the groups of Roma young leaders

1. Title of local research
2. Municipality/Commune
3. Working group (names of young leaders who carried out the research)
4. Period (period in which the research is carried out)
5. Introduction (why this research is conducted and its objectives)
6. Methodology (what did you do and how did you do it)
7. Results
 - Achievements
 - Challenges
 - Lessons learned
 - Impact on working group
 - Impact on young people and community
8. Conclusions
 - Recommendations
 - Plans for the future
9. Annexes
 - List of interviewees
 - List of documents read

ACTION RESEARCH

YOUNG ROMA IN ACTION

The Action Research - Albanian National Report is a summary of local researches conducted by Roma and non-Roma young people in the Fier region, in the towns of Pogradec and Korça. These local researches realized with the broad-based community participation, aimed at identifying Roma community issues in the project areas and to address them to the respective local government units.

The Action Research National Report is an outcome of the close cooperation between the organizations Roma Active Albania and Save the Children Albania country office.



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