



# **Leaders – Young Roma in Action**

## **Regional Action**

### **Research Report**





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## Regional Action Research 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 and implemented by Save the Children Country Offices in Albania, North West Balkan (NWB) and Kosovo/a, in close collaboration with local partner Roma Active Albania and Inciativa 6.

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## ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

<b>AR</b>	Action Research
<b>CRC</b>	Convention on the Rights of the Child
<b>HandiKOS</b>	Association of Paraplegics and Paralyzed Children of Kosova
<b>LSMS</b>	Living Standards Measurement Survey
<b>LYRA</b>	Leaders Young Roma in Action
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organization
<b>NWB</b>	North West Balkan
<b>RAA</b>	Roma Active in Albania
<b>SC</b>	Save the Children

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report calls on **targeted** and **long-term, harmonized multi-sectorial** and **multi-level interventions** to reduce young Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian *discrimination* and *social exclusion* in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosova/o. As foundation for active and integrated participation of young Roma and non-Roma in their communities' effort to improve had been laid through **LYRA** project, **further support** is needed to promote attitudinal and behavioral changes that will ensure the sustainability of this foundation.

*Well-planned, systematic and continuous provision of practical skills to young Roma and non-Roma alike in order to become active citizens and change their lives in a desirable way works well regardless of ethnicity or social origin. Young Roma and non-Roma seized the opportunity offered by Save the Children for individual growth and used it to help their communities improve their lives and to open up new channels of communication and collaboration with other non-Roma majority.*

Exclusion and discrimination **prevents** young Roma from **fully developing** their academic, social and physical capacities to build independent and productive lives that will be useful for political, economic and social improvement of their countries and region. Regional action within European Union Accession context and European Union policy instruments can prove effective to promoting social inclusion and non-discrimination of young Roma.

In spite of the general adequate legislation and political attention to the issue, young Roma across Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosova/o find themselves in a state of discrimination and social exclusion at an individual, institutional and societal level. Even though there are no discriminatory and exclusion institutional policies and regulations, individual and societal prejudices toward young Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian are transferred into public institutions as a result of employees in the public institutions holding discriminatory and exclusionist behaviors and attitudes.

There is **widespread discrimination** against and exclusion of young Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian in the **schools**. Dropout rate of young Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian is higher than those of non-Roma. Extracurricular activities are less frequently attended by young Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian than others. While school policies may be positively differentiating young Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian in order to encourage their academic improvement and social involvement, some teachers negatively differentiate them, thus reinforcing societal prejudices against these groups. Young Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian get **fewer benefits** out of the existing educational systems than other young people do.

Statistics disaggregated by ethnicity is generally lacking or of poor quality. Data collected by the LYRA researchers are not always generalizable, but if cautiously used, they can point to areas in which there is immediate need for data about Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian population, which can be later used to accurately understand and address problems faced by the Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian populations. Evidence-based policies call for higher quality data disaggregated by ethnicity.

Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian minorities have lack of understanding and awareness on discrimination practiced against them. In addition to adequate laws and policies aiming to curb down discrimination of these groups, Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian populations must be equipped with knowledge and skills to identify discrimination against them and stand up to it. Awareness programs focused on children's and human rights and increased interactions among Roma and non-Roma populations if adequately run can be conducive to non-discrimination and inclusion of young Roma.

**Gender discrimination** flourishing on cultural and economic foundations is widespread among three countries. Action research in Kosova/o found that gender discrimination occurs particularly more often among the Roma, Egyptian and Ashkali populations. **Girls** are subject to **early marriages** significantly more often than boys in Roma, Egyptian and Ashkali communities and as a result Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian girls have fewer schooling years and drop out of schools more frequently than Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian boys.

Young Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians are **socially excluded** on economic, identity, ability, gender and political grounds. Most young Roma and their families live under poverty level, unemployed or employed in the grey market economy. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, some



young Roma and their families have difficulties getting identity or travel card due to the lack of information or foreign citizenship.

Young Roma and Egyptian in Albania **are not involved in local decision-making**. Political exclusion will breed more social and political disengagement within Roma and Egyptian communities, thus further weakening their social inclusion. **Social inclusion** of Roma and non-Roma disabled children is a necessity. Laws and policies are conducive to social inclusion, yet their implementation is limited due to lack of financial and human resources. If left unaddressed, disabled children will find themselves in a worsening situation.

**Sustainability** of Roma, Egyptian and Ashkali actions to improve their lives, reduce discrimination, fully participate politically, economically and socially in their societies can be ensured only when a critical mass of young people from these communities have the knowledge and skills to initiate, implement and finalize projects on their own. Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian population in all the three countries are good entrepreneurs even in disadvantageous situations. Fostering their entrepreneurship spirit through transfer of business management and vocational skills will make young Roma competitive in the labor market either as professionals or as entrepreneurs.

There is need for further regional research in order to establish what actions and policies are effective in **reducing discrimination** and **increasing social inclusion**. For a regional approach, researchers should use a unified methodology and instruments in order to ensure cross-country comparability and stronger foundations for regional policy and advocacy actions.

*The LYRA regional advocacy plan, a strategic coordination document among the young leaders, suggests that reduced discrimination of young Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian in education, promotion of social inclusion for Roma children and youth at the local, national and regional level, and civil registration of young Roma are the first steps to empower them.*

## INTRODUCTION

This report is a **testimony** of the **successful empowerment of young Roma** through the process of action research<sub>1</sub> in: Albania, Bosnia Herzegovina and Kosova/o as part of the project LYRA – Leaders Young Roma in Action jointly implemented by Save the Children and Project Partners – Roma Active Albania (RAA) and Inciativa 6 and funded by the U.S. Department of State.

Unprepared to conduct action research (AR), young Roma, Egyptian and Ashkali<sub>2</sub> and non-Roma in these three countries were provided **practical** and **theoretical tools** to identify and address the main concerns of young people in the targeted Roma communities so that they will be able **to take effective and efficient actions** to improve social inclusion, reduce discrimination and increase protection of the Roma populations at local, national and international level.

*Shared goals, knowledge, working environment and practice as part of the project's activities helped these youngsters not only to gain a set of necessary skills to conduct their research and advocacy work, but also to immerse themselves in each other's way of life and way of thinking.*

Such immersion raised the awareness of Roma and non-Roma participants about issues faced by young Roma and their communities. That resulted in findings and suggestions that generally reflect concerns, opinions, perceptions of and suggestions by the Roma community in general and young Roma in particular on how to address problems faced by Roma and sometimes non-Roma community alike.

The action research process was far from being easy, because many participants lacked previous experience and necessary knowledge to process and analyze new and unknown concepts and information and use action research methods. Gaining the trust of the Roma communities and access to representatives of institutions relevant to the project was also

difficult. In few cases, LYRA teams gave a greater weight to actions to solve problems than research methodology to identify them.

### ***Yet the process itself was one of growth.***

Some of those weaknesses were overcome through continuous regional and local training on action research including methodology, communication, leadership, team work and advocacy. Many young Roma and non-Roma joined the LYRA program as generally disengaged citizens with either no apparent interest or active involvement in the lives of their community members.

*Young Roma and non-Roma who joined LYRA program came out of this process as engaged citizens empowered with knowledge and tools to explore their communities' problems and filled with self-confidence that they can help to initiate solutions for these problems.*

The LYRA participants found out that Roma are socially excluded and discriminated against at an individual level by non-Roma populations and sometimes by their own kin. In few cases there is social exclusion and discrimination at the institutional and legal level.

Many Roma live in abject poverty. Young and adult Roma alike are absent from the work forces in any major sectors and in white collar jobs. They have lower levels of education with higher dropout rates at all levels of education than non-Roma population. Even though there is no legal discrimination regarding the education of Roma children, there is discrimination against of Roma children by individual teachers and social exclusion by schools through non-action. Roma have poor work skills as a result of poor education.

There are obvious deficiencies in civil registration and authoritative data about the Roma community, which prevents governments from action or excuses them for non-action to address and remedy Roma problems.

Many young Roma, especially girls, enter into marriage at a very early age diminishing their chances for more education, better health and deeper social and civic involvement in the society.

Many young and adult Roma have no understanding of the concept of discrimination and as a result they are often unaware of being discriminated against. Roma's social, civic and political inclusion is at best poor and at worst non-existent. Roma children with disabilities are socially excluded and educationally discriminated against just by the sheer fact that there are fewer schools that can offer equally good quality inclusive education to Roma with disabilities as it is offered to other children with no disability. However, the LYRA teams found that none of these expressions of social exclusion and discrimination are of a legal nature.

## Objectives of the Report

This report calls for **further empowerment** of young Roma and their integration with the non-Roma majority.

Furthermore, this report makes **the case for capacity building** as a **key tool** to empower young Roma to take their present and future in their hands.

It identifies a few of the issues that Roma populations see as most critical in increasing their **social inclusion** and **decreasing discrimination** against them. It also includes **case studies** of selected community interventions undertaken by youth leaders to address identified issues.

Concretely, this report aims to:

- Provide evidence of successful young Roma involvement in identifying and addressing problems they face as a community;
- Show that young Roma and non-Roma can work together in teams thus raising their awareness about one another's problems;
- Identify key issues faced by the Roma communities from the perspectives of Roma people and institutions' representatives;
- Provide initial or additional data about the targeted Roma communities and identify problems which are critical to the Roma community.

- Encourage interested donors and implementers to support initiatives similar in concept (capacity building) and/or implementation (learning by doing) with the LYRA project, and emphasize that the research part should receive as much attention as action and the following stages of advocacy.
- Stress that such support for the young Roma should persist in order to create a critical mass of young Roma prepared and interested to get involved in identification and resolution of their communities' problems.
- Propose regionally applicable advocacy messages and solutions to effectively address those identified issues.

## Methodology

This report uses triangulation as a method to analyze qualitative and quantitative data provided by the national action research reports on young Roma in Albania<sup>3</sup>, Bosnia Herzegovina<sup>4</sup> and Kosova/o<sup>5</sup>, local reports when necessary, consultation with the LYRA teams at the regional workshop in February 2014 or via e-mail, Save the Children staff and RAA, and relevant literature shedding light on theoretical or contextual variables helping to clarify the adequacy and relevance of information collected during action research.

The National Action Research Reports in the three countries were a product of data and advocacy work conducted by the LYRA teams in cooperation with Save the Children, their partners (*RAA Albania* and *Iniciativa 6* in Kosova/o), and action research and advocacy experts. Local reports were a product of each LYRA action research team focused on one or more problems faced by one Roma community.

LYRA action research teams used action research methodology to identify problems and collect data. Young Roma team members were part of the targeted Roma communities and they further involved their communities in the identification of issues they ended up researching. This project extended the idea of action research into an integrative action research in which Roma and non-Roma youth teams researched the problems concerning their communities, recognizing that some are not simply “Roma related” problems, because they are affected by and are effecting Roma and non-Roma populations in each participating country.

Action research was conducted by a large team of young Roma and non-Roma in Albania (33), Bosnia Herzegovina (75) and Kosova/o (28) at a local level. It was difficult to build teams with members having some participatory and research experience as a result of low engagement of young Roma in civic life, lack of experience with action research projects and due to high dropout rates of young Roma at the end of primary or while in secondary school. Thus, for the sake of this project's implementation, it was necessary to build a critical mass of young Roma that had the skills to be an integral part of the project. Furthermore, in order to build meaningful interaction between young Roma and non-Roma, the latter were also invited to apply to join the action research teams. In a social context where there is little interaction and exchange of ideas and skills between young Roma and non-Roma, an integrative action research approach can be beneficial to collaboration between young people of different ethnic identities. As the Albanian and Bosnian experience shows, it was not easy to find young Roma who met all the criteria for participation, and some youngsters were included in the project upon the condition to continue to attend school and finish that school year.

As the critical mass of Roma and non-Roma youngsters for implementation of this project was achieved in the three countries, Save the Children trained these sixty young leaders in action research methods in a five day training "Steps towards empowerment" held in Tirana in April 2013. Knowledge and skills provided in this training trickled down to other young leaders in the communities in which the research was conducted in the three countries. The sixty young leaders trained in Tirana trained another 132 youngsters through several workshops in locations where the action research was implemented.

## **Targeted Communities, Research Questions and Sample Sizes**

- ✓ Twelve communities in the Western Balkans (five communities in Albania, five in Bosnia Herzegovina and two communities in Kosova/o) were selected to conduct this action research project.
- ✓ Each LYRA action research team selected their topics of interest in consultation with the targeted communities.
- ✓ The main instruments to collect data were face-to-face interviews, surveys and focus groups.

## Albania

- In Albania, the targeted communities are located in Baltëza, Levani, Korça, Pogradeci and Roskoveci. In total, the LYRA team interviewed **212** individuals.
- In Baltëza inhabited by 300 young Roma, the LYRA team decided to research the effects of the lack of public transportation on education and employment of young people. The team completed 52 questionnaires with young Roma and non-Roma.
- In Levan inhabited by 840 Roma according to existing studies, the LYRA team decided to research causes for the abandonment of the basic education. They did a door to door screening in 300 families in Levan, completed 30 questionnaires with Roma and non-Roma people and conducted interviews with the school principal, teachers, and Regional Education Directorate employees. According to the AR team in Levan, this unit is inhabited by 2,500 Roma.



- In Korça, the LYRA team decided to research representation of the young Roma in local decision-making. They completed 80 questionnaires with Roma and non-Roma, and six interviews with local decision and policy-making officials.
- In Pogradec inhabited by 167 Roma families, the LYRA team decided to research segregation and discriminatory labeling of the secondary school “Kozma Gjok Basho” as a Roma school. They completed 30 questionnaires; 20 Roma and non-Roma children aged 11-14 years old and 10 with children that have left or dropped out of this school and interviews with: the “Kozma Gjok Basho” school director, education and planning specialists in the local education office, the head of school board and parents of children that had withdrawn from the school. The team conducted a focus group with former students that had dropped out of the targeted school. It

also took pictures of different nine-year schools in Pogradec to compare conditions of the targeted school with the rest of them.

- In Roskovec inhabited by 157 Roma, the LYRA team decided to research the establishment of a youth center. They completed 30 questionnaires: 15 with Roma and 15 with non-Roma young people aged 16-26 years old. They also conducted a focus group with 13 participants of different age groups and an interview with the mayor of Roskovec.

## Bosnia and Herzegovina

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the targeted communities are located in Banja Luka, Bijeljina, Mostar, Sarajevo and Tuzla. The LYRA project targeted those five communities because they are the most densely populated areas and contain the largest Roma community in the country. In total, the LYRA action research team interviewed **262** Roma and Egyptians, and 19 representatives of various institutions and collected information about 385 individuals, of which 362 are Roma and Egyptians.



- In Banja Luka 200 Roma live on a permanent basis. The LYRA action research team decided to identify the key problems of the Roma community. The team completed 62 interviews, 39 of which with Roma.
- In Bijeljina inhabited by 270 Roma families, the LYRA team decided to research the sustainability of Roma children and youth in the education system. The team completed 50 interviews with Roma parents and children and 10 additional interviews with representatives of education institutions.
- In Mostar inhabited by 500 Roma, 150 of whom have come from Kosova/o and have refugee



status, the LYRA team decided to create a social map of socially disadvantaged Roma settlements in Karašerbeš and Novo Naselje. The team collected data on 96 Roma in the settlement of Karašerbeš and 60 Roma in Novo Naselje.

- In Sarajevo, the LYRA team decided to research social inclusion of young Roma. The team completed 50 questionnaires with young Roma (28 male and 22 female) aged 13 to 20 years. Additionally, the LYRA team here conducted interviews with representatives from several sport and dance clubs and schools.
- In Tuzla inhabited by over 5000 Roma, the LYRA team decided to research discrimination of the Roma population regarding information dissemination, migration, employment and health. The team completed 71 interviews of which 67 are Roma respondents.

### Kosovo/o

In Kosova/o, the targeted communities are located in Gjakova and Prizren. The LYRA teams collected information about **1,052** young Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian aged 6 to 22 years.



- In Gjakova inhabited by around 600 Roma, 6,080 Ashkali, and an unknown number of Egyptians, the LYRA team decided to research two questions:
  - The first one focused on discrimination against young Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian from teachers. The LYRA team collected information on 346 youngsters (15-30 years old) through 149 face-to-face interviews with children and 197 face-to-face interviews with parents of school age children.
  - The second question focused on inclusion of children with special needs in the education system. The LYRA team collected information on a total of 205 children with special needs.

The respondents were selected from the beneficiaries' database of two NGO's dealing with children with special needs: HandiKOS and One-to-One.

- In Prizren which is inhabited by Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians, the LYRA team decided to research two questions:
  - o The first one focused on school dropout of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children. The team collected information on a total of 294 school age Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian children through 139 face-to-face interviews with children and 171 face-to-face interviews with parents.
  - o The second question focused on early marriages. The LYRA team collected information on 217 young Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians through 109 face-to-face interviews with children and 108 face-to-face interviews with parents.

## Limitations of the Research

Young leaders have little theoretical understanding of the research topics they were researching on. Thus, it is possible that important phenomena, behaviors or attitudes that are related with the researched question were not researched well or at all. The assignment of national consultants to help young leaders with action research may have remedied this limitation to some degree.

Vulnerable, excluded and discriminated communities may be reluctant to answer surveys for several reasons. They may have feelings of distrust regarding the survey topics or people that conduct it. They may not see a purpose in answering the survey, thus time to answer the survey questions will be considered as wasted.

“Social desirability bias” is a concern with all the survey data. This refers to the tendency of respondents to over report socially desirable attitudes and behaviors. In other words reporters may report what they think the surveyor wants to hear. Given the sensitive nature of some of the research topics, this remains a real concern.

“Refusal bias” is a concern with all the survey data, as individuals may refuse to answer a question where the respondent may feel that a true answer may reflect poorly on them.

With a few exceptions, such as in a site in Bosnia and Herzegovina, refusals were either not recorded or refusal rate was not reported.

Sampling is an important component of research that determines the generalizability and certainty of results. Only the Kosovar LYRA action research teams used probability sampling to implement their projects. The Kosovar LYRA action research teams conducting their work on *school dropouts* and *early marriages* in Prizren and *discrimination by teachers* in Gjakova used systematic random sampling. They interviewed their subjects at every third house in the targeted neighborhoods. These results can be used within their limitations to draw general conclusions about these issues for Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian population. The procedure differed regarding the topic “Inclusion of children with special needs in the schooling system”. There is not an all-inclusive database of children with special needs. The sample was randomly selected through beneficiaries’ database of One-to-One and HandiKOS, which provide services for these children in Gjakova. Results from this study can be generalizable only about children with special needs that have been part of organizations similar to One-to-One and HandiKOS.

The Albanian LYRA action research teams used convenience sampling. Thus, results drawn from their studies are not generalizable. However, they can be used as a starting point for initiating action and conducting systematic research in the future in order to determine with greater certainty the problems that Roma and Egyptian community face and the most effective and efficient ways to address those issues.

Most action research teams across countries were first time interviewers with basic understanding of principles of interviewing. Many of them, being part of the targeted community, may have a built-in bias about the topics they were researching. Both these facts may have weakened data quality, biased data and as a result biased the conclusions.

The LYRA project researched and acted on a number of similar research questions such as school dropout, social and recreational inclusion and social mapping of the Roma communities. Yet no comparison between countries is possible for mainly three reasons. Firstly, the action research process was implemented differently from one country to another. Secondly, the techniques used to collect information were not similar across the three countries. The Albanian teams used mostly focus groups, small convenient sampling

with simple questionnaires and interviews. The Bosnian and Kosovar action research teams mostly used the survey. Thirdly and most importantly, the development of instruments was made in each country separately and without coordination. This resulted in different instruments and variables, thus incomparable data.

## Structure of the Report

- I. The report starts by describing the LYRA project: goals, implementation, benefits and challenges focusing mostly on action research component. The main body of the research focuses on three themes: discrimination, social exclusion and education. Even though these three themes are discussed in separate chapters, they are deeply intertwined, affect and interact with one another. For example, in Sarajevo, the capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina, 40% of interviewed Roma are not registered at their birth or upon arrival in the country either due to lack of information or foreign citizenship and, as a result, they lack identification documents. This becomes a ground for discrimination and prevents them from having full access to opportunities such as schooling and employment, which are among the prerequisites of fully participating in economic, social and civil life. Lack of education and employment deepens their societal exclusion, possibly due to discrimination, lack of professional skills and poverty. So the Roma get stuck in a closed circle of generational exclusion, discrimination and poverty. Thus, each chapter and its sections should be read as an equally important constituent component of the overarching theme of human rights as inherent to all human beings regardless of origin, sex or opinion.
- II. The second chapter discusses the definition of discrimination and researched cases that fall into that category. The main focus of this chapter is upon (1) identification of discrimination against Roma populations at school or by data collection policies; (2) perceptions that Roma populations hold with regard to being discriminated against; (3) and perceptions that non-Roma population hold with regard to discrimination against Roma populations.
- III. The third chapter discusses the definition of social exclusion and cases of social exclusion in each of the country's context. Grounds on which social exclusion is

discussed are economic, identity, political, ability and gender. Progression from one ground of social exclusion to another reinforces the argument that root causes of this phenomenon are highly correlated with one another.

- IV. The fourth chapter is on education of the Roma population. It describes a gloomy reality in which Roma populations are the least educated among constituent ethnic groups, with high dropout rates and insufficient interest to advance their children's education.
- V. The fifth chapter describes a case for young Roma empowerment by presenting programmatic and individual success stories in all the three countries. In Albania, the LYRA team in Roskovec successfully advocated and obtained space for a youth center where young Roma and non-Roma can interact together; while Kristi from Korça has become a leader for change in Roma-non-Roma relations. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the LYRA program successfully implemented an internship component, in which 10 young Roma completed internships in different organizations, and Ramiz, one of them, excelled in his work. In Kosova/o, Fatlum became a catalyst for increasing interaction between Roma and non-Roma Prizren communities.
- VI. The last two chapters present conclusions and recommendations. The chapter on recommendations consists of two sections. One section introduces policy recommendations. The other section laconically presents regional advocacy action plans drafted by LYRA teams in a collaborative process.

## THE PROJECT: ACTION RESEARCH COMPONENT

The LYRA project aimed **to empower and develop capacities and competences** of Roma and non-Roma young leaders in Albania, Kosova/o and Bosnia and Herzegovina. It helped LYRA participants to identify discrimination and social exclusion as issues of common importance for the Roma across the region and propose regionally applicable advocacy messages and solutions to effectively address those issues.

The LYRA project kicked off on **March 26, 2013**. Organizations *Roma Active Albania* (RAA) and *Iniciativa 6* in Kosova/o were the implementing partners in these two countries, while in Bosnia Herzegovina no partner was selected to avoid divisions along ethnic lines which are also reflected in the Roma organizations working in that country.

Save the Children trained **60** young Roma and non-Roma leaders in methodology, implementation and ethics of conducting action research. The trained young leaders trained an additional 126 Roma and non-Roma peers. They were divided into 14 research teams and spread out in the targeted Roma and other communities to figure out research topics that mostly concerned those communities.

Once the topics were determined, the research teams with the help of Save the Children, RAA, and *Iniciativa 6* identified groups of actors in the targeted communities that would be interviewed. For each group of actors they developed the necessary instruments and collected data on 14 research topics. Each team organized and analyzed data from which they developed a report outlining the research process, findings and potential actions to remedy problems identified by the research.

At the end of the research phase, the young Roma and non-Roma leaders developed local advocacy to address the problems that they had identified and researched in their communities. In addition to action plans, the LYRA action research teams were involved in advocacy through their participation in national, regional and international events where they presented their work, concerns and solutions about problems faced by the Roma communities across the three countries.

Use of action research equipped the LYRA team with basic knowledge on research logic and procedures. The biggest gains for the young leaders were awareness about their ability to act in order to address their problems and improve their lives, collection of information about how to recognize problems of social exclusion and discrimination, team work and leadership skills, communication and advocacy skills to execute their potential actions and, in some cases, real life advocacy work. At the end of the project, 186 young Roma and non-Roma felt more prepared than ever before to take their present and future lives in their hands and mold them in such a way that they will be beneficial to themselves and their communities.

Save the Children in Albania, RAA, Iniciativa 6 and the young leaders faced a lot of challenges. However, rather than being discouraged, all actors used these challenges for organizational and personal growth. Even though the theoretical pool of young Roma that could potentially engage in the LYRA project is quite large, because the Roma population is younger than groups of other ethnic identities, the actual pool from which the LYRA participants were selected was significantly smaller. The main reasons for that are that like in other Eastern European Countries, the Roma population in Albania, Bosnia Herzegovina and Kosova/o, is civically disengaged; has the lowest education level; lives in extreme poverty; and in some cases, Roma people have difficulties producing identity and/or travel cards.

However, in order to ensure that young Roma participated in this project, Save the Children and its partners helped some young Roma to acquire identity or travel documents and conditioned a few others' participation in the project upon continuation of education or graduation from either primary or secondary school. Upon that condition, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, three young Roma completed their elementary education and two others are currently attending high school.,7

# DISCRIMINATION AGAINST YOUNG ROMA AND OTHER NON-ROMA CHILDREN

In this report **discrimination** is defined as “*a negative differentiation in treatment of an individual or a group, based on certain grounds such as sex, origin, or opinion, which has the purpose or effect of impairing someone to enjoy her or his rights.*”

**Discrimination can be legal, institutional, societal or individual.**

Legal discrimination exists when there is negative differentiation of a group in the laws of the land. Institutional discrimination exists when there are approved institutional policies that negatively differentiate individuals belonging to groups.

Societal discrimination occurs when groups in the society negatively differentiate individuals or other groups in that society as a result of the prejudices they hold about the group discriminated against. Individual discrimination occurs when specific individuals negatively differentiate other individuals of groups due to her/his personal prejudices.

As one of the main mechanisms that brings about social exclusion of individuals and groups, the LYRA action research teams carefully researched discrimination during their work in the areas of education, information, and data availability.

The action research in Albania, Bosnia Herzegovina and Kosova/o did not find any grounds for legal discrimination in these three countries in the topics that they researched. Laws and by-laws guarantee equal treatment and opportunities for all citizens. Generally, researched institutions such as schools have policies in place that either ensure equal



treatment or promote positive differentiation of young Roma in schools. Discriminatory and exclusionary attitudes and behavior of the non-Roma population were not researched systematically. Plenty of research documents discriminatory and exclusionary attitudes and behaviors toward the Roma population not only in these three countries, but in the Western Balkans and across Europe as well. The action research found that there are gaps between laws, rules, policies and their implementation. Public institutions indirectly perpetuate discriminatory and exclusionary actions when the public sector workers in conscious or subconscious ways, openly or subtly, exhibit their discriminatory attitude and behavior while conducting public business. Thus legal, institutional and policy grounds for non-discriminatory and inclusionary actions are tainted and sometimes heavily deformed by discriminatory and exclusionary attitudes and behaviors of individuals that work in public institutions.

Discrimination, whether direct or indirect, may go unnoticed by the victims, the perpetrators and observers. In settings which discriminatory attitudes and behaviors against a group are accepted as normal due to its long historical roots, business as usual will perpetuate discrimination regardless of the existing laws or policies. Victims of discrimination having known no other treatment but discrimination will accept that situation as normal. Some perpetrators or observers of discrimination are aware that discrimination against people of a specific group is happening; yet there are others that are not aware that their actions are discriminatory or that they are observing a case of discrimination, for the same reason that victims of discrimination do not think they are such victims.

The LYRA action research team in Banja Luka in Bosnia and Herzegovina found that 87 percent of the interviewed Roma do not believe that they are victims of discrimination, while 47 percent of the interviewed non-Roma population state that Roma are discriminated against. Further questioning revealed that many interviewed Roma did not know how to define discrimination. However, many Roma respondents maintained that they were not discriminated even after having explanations about the definition of discrimination.

## *Lack of Data and Discrimination*

Reliable data and statistics are preconditions to identifying, understanding, analyzing and addressing problems in every society and in every aspect of human life. In the absence of reliable data and statistics every step identified above most likely will be incomplete and poorly constructed. Lack of reliable data and statistics in countries with scarce public and/or private resources can be used as justification for not recognizing the presence of existing problems, hiding problems or justifying inaction or insufficient action to address those problems from that country's government. Lack of such data and statistics can become an impediment for absorbing donors' funds available to address such problems. And last but not least, this can weaken further or discourage vulnerable groups such as Roma and children with special needs to start or continue to work to improve their quality of life.

The LYRA action research teams, across the three participating countries, Albania, Bosnia Herzegovina and Kosova/o, were faced with lack of or poorly constructed data about every topic they researched. They found that available data are scarce and sometimes inaccurate. Almost all developing countries have deficiencies regarding their data about children with special needs. The LYRA action research team in Gjakova, Kosova/o, found out that this is true for Kosova/o too. Currently, there are no official data to approximate the number of children with special needs in Kosova/o.<sup>10</sup> Furthermore, data about the Roma population in Kosova/o are incomplete because the northern tip of Kosova/o where many Roma live did not participate in the Census in 2011. The LYRA action research teams in Bosnia and Herzegovina conducted social and economic mapping of few Roma settlements, precisely because there is an absence of data about these communities. In Albania, there do exist data collected by the Census in 2011, but that data is contested by the Roma associations as inaccurate.

Lack of awareness among Roma populations about importance of registration of deeds such as births or marriages may become a source of lack of data. For example, data from the survey on early marriages in Prizren, Kosovo show that 91.7% of young Roma stated that they did not register their marriage in the municipality at the time of marriage and 40.7% of them registered their marriage afterwards. The fact that the majority of early marriages go unregistered in the civil registry makes this phenomenon invisible to the officials, policy-makers and other stakeholders. Hence programs that raise awareness among Roma

populations regarding importance of the official registration and measures to facilitate registration of deeds such as births and marriages can help remedy lack of data.

### ***Discrimination by teachers and at schools***

Discrimination against young Roma from teachers may manifest itself in different ways. Roma children may be segregated within a classroom or a school; teachers may not pay the same attention as they pay to other non-Roma children or simply ignore them; teachers may not check Roma children's homework; or they may not provide the same additional help as they do for non-Roma children.

In the absence of any studies or reports detailing discrimination of Roma children by their teachers and in the presence of widely held perception that Roma children are discriminated against by their teachers, the LYRA action research team in Gjakova, Kosova/o researched the prevalence of discrimination of Roma children in the schooling system and found that such discrimination takes place. In any of the 19 schools that were surveyed, there was evidence of segregated schools and classrooms. All interviewees attended regular schools and regular classrooms. School segregation can be a result of Roma population being concentrated in specific neighborhoods, thus most Roma children attend schools that are located close to their neighborhoods. However, there were elements of segregation within classrooms. Around 75 percent of Roma respondents stated that even though they attend classrooms predominantly with non-Roma children, almost 60 percent of Roma children share a desk with children of the same ethnic identity, while 90 percent of them socialize with children of the same ethnic identity during school breaks or after school hours.

The LYRA action research team in Pogradeci, Albania researched the case of what seemed to be a discriminatory and segregated Roma school. Among the Pogradeci inhabitants, it is common to call the 9-year Kozma Gjok Basho School a Roma school even though only 10 percent of the student body is of Roma descent. Furthermore, this school is not well maintained and the facilities are far from being acceptable for a learning institution. Parents are also withdrawing their children from this school and enroll them in other schools. Label of this school as Roma and withdrawal of non-Roma children from this school makes the Roma community to feel discriminated against.

Focus groups and interviews conducted with different stakeholders suggest that Kozma Gjok Basho School is labeled as a Roma school because of its geographic position, i.e. in the outskirts of the town and close to a predominantly Roma neighborhood, and is in a neglected condition. Focus groups and a survey with 20 current Roma and non-Roma students in this school revealed that discrimination against Roma children may not be a problem. The current students state that they have very good relationships with teachers and they rarely differentiate students based on their ethnic identity. They feel that generally their rights are respected. Results of a survey conducted with parents of current students support statements that teacher-student relations are positive and there is no gender based discrimination. However, questionnaires with children that have been withdrawn from Kozma Gjok Basho School reveal not only bad conditions of the school facilities, but also low quality teaching and disagreements with teachers and peers have pushed them into transferring into other schools. Representatives of the Department of Education in Pogradeci consider bad infrastructural condition of the Kozma Gjok Basho School as a result of the scarcity of resources rather than discrimination.

Whether bad infrastructure or claimed low quality teaching difficult teacher-student and peer-to-peer relationships from those withdrawn from the school are proxy indicators of discrimination against the Roma population can be determined by systematic research. However, across the board, interviews showed that people in the town of Pogradeci associate Roma with poverty, low quality services and conflictual relationships. It is precisely this perception about the Roma population that have, most likely, perpetuated labeling of the Kozma Gjok Basho School as a Roma school even though only 10% of the student body there is Roma.

# SOCIAL EXCLUSION OF YOUNG ROMA

There is no paucity of reports suggesting that young Roma, Egyptians and Ashkali across Eastern and South Eastern Europe are socially excluded. This report reinforces these claims and describes with quantitative and qualitative data that these groups are indeed socially excluded in Albania, Bosnia Herzegovina and Kosova/o.

The analysis of social exclusion here is based on the European Commission definition of social exclusion as when people “*are prevented from participating fully in economic, social and civil life and/or when their access to income and other resources (personal, family, social and cultural) is so inadequate as to exclude them from enjoying a standard of living and quality of life that is regarded as acceptable by the society in which they live. In such situations people are often unable to fully access their fundamental rights.*”<sup>11</sup>

Social exclusion is viewed as a multidimensional concept, each dimension of which reinforces the others. ***Dimensions of social exclusion whose elements were identified and researched by the LYRA teams across the three countries fall into the following categories: economic, political, identity and citizenship, gender, and ability.*** Occurrence of social exclusion was found mostly at individual and sub-group level.

### ***Economic Dimension of Social Exclusion***

The economic dimension of social exclusion has an obvious relation with poverty and its correlates such as labor market status, education, gender and migration, which separately or in combination submit Roma, Egyptians and Ashkali populations to a

state of deprivation that does not allow them to participate in society and fully enjoy acceptable living standards. Living in abject poverty, with few employment opportunities to lift themselves out of poverty, Roma make choices that often have the unintended result of worsening their and their children's present and future living standards.

Poverty and unemployment have been pointed out as important determinants of increased school dropout rates, early marriages, especially among young girls, and lack of access to services that are available to but underutilized by the young Roma.

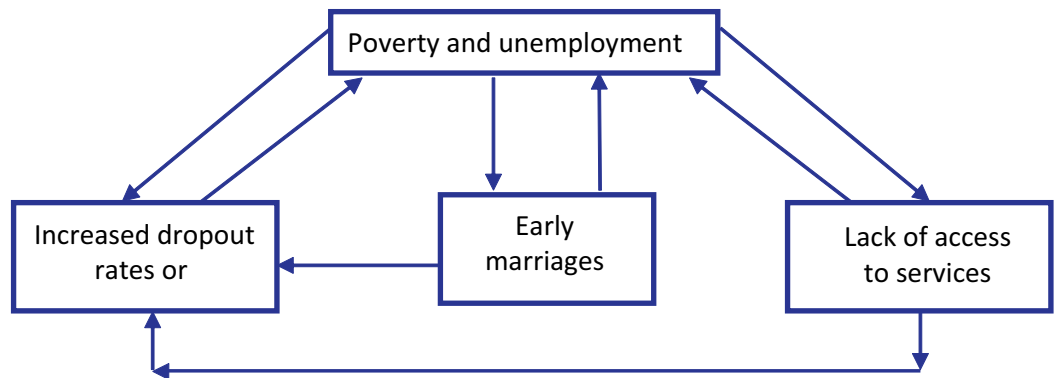


Figure 3.1. A schematic representation of interrelations among poverty and unemployment, dropout, early marriages and access to services

Data from the LYRA project in Bosnia Herzegovina, Kosova/o and Albania suggest that poverty and unemployment are widespread among the Roma. In Banja Luka, Mostar and Tuzla, in Bosnia Herzegovina, the percentage of those holding a steady legal job ranges from 0.15% to 11%.

The rest of Roma either work as day laborers or in the grey economy or do not participate in the labor force at all. Poverty and unemployment were among the main issues identified in Albania in the city of Korça and communes of Baltëza and Levan and in Kosova/o in the communes of Prizren and Gjakova.

In Bijeljina, Bosnia and Herzegovina, 48 out of 50 Roma respondents said that it is important that their children stay at school even after graduating from secondary school. Yet this

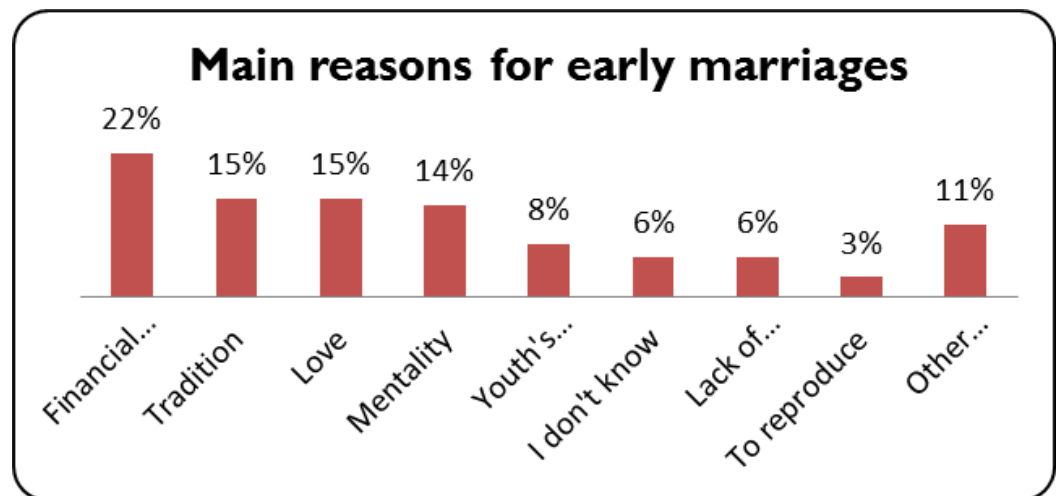
preference seems to be dependent on the financial situation of the family. Thirty-four out of 50 respondents stated that they will not be able to send their children to school in the absence of the assistance in the form of books and school supplies.

In Levan, Albania, one-third of 30 respondents stated that young Roma dropped out of school due to difficult economic conditions.

In Prizren, 52% of 48 school-age respondents that have dropped out of school selected financial difficulties as a main reason for dropping out of school, while 35% of school-age respondents that are currently attending school plan not to continue their education due to poor financial conditions; 16% because they have to work and 19% because they have to take care of their siblings.

Ninety-three percent (93%) of the interviewed parents of children with special needs in Gjakova, Kosova/o, stated that they would send their children to school if they had better financial conditions.

In Prizren, Kosova/o, economic consideration may have some effect on early marriages. Less than 3% of 109 young Roma, Egyptian and Ashkali respondents admit that difficult



financial situation have affected their decision to get married. When asked in general about early marriages, 22% state that a difficult financial situation is a main factor in entering into a marriage. It is understandable that respondents will be reluctant to admit that financial difficulties pushed them to enter into a marriage, because it may seem like they are “spoiling” the idea that people enter a marriage because of love. Once they have the opportunity to separate themselves from the phenomenon and asked about reasons for early marriages in general, they tend to select difficult financial situation more frequently than any other reason.

### ***Identity, Identity Documents and Social Exclusion***

Ethnic identity is a ground for social exclusion from others and for self-exclusion. Ethnic identity is associated with social, cultural, and organizational traits that differentiate an ethnic group from another. These differences are a foundation for ethnic stereotypes, which serve as foundations for prejudices, discriminatory and exclusionist behavior from the other ethnic groups. In general, minorities are more likely to experience negative effects in their lives as a result of these prejudices. An example of the social exclusion of Roma due to their ethnic identity was researched by the LYRA action research teams Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The nine-year Kozma Gjak Basho School is located in Pogradec, a city with 40,138 inhabitants. Out of 40 Roma children attending basic education in this city, 18 of them attend Kozma Gjak Basho School. They compose 10% of this school's student body. This school is labeled as Roma School and it is heavily underfunded. The LYRA team found that there has not been any investment for 40 years in the nine-year secondary school, while there have been investments in other nine-year schools in Pogradeci. As a result many parents have withdrawn their children from this school and enrolled them in other nine-year schools in the city. Ethnic identity and demographic characteristics of children attending this school may be underlying reasons for inaction from the education authorities and prejudices existing among the non-Roma population. However, systematic research would have been a more effective tool to uncover the reality behind this underfunded and neglected basic education school.

Social exclusion of a part of young Roma in Sarajevo occurs on citizenship and identity documents' grounds. The LYRA action research team found that out of 50 interviewed



young Roma 16 did not figure in the registry due to foreign nationality or lack of information; 26 did not have health insurance mostly because their parents had foreign nationality, and some have difficulty enrolling in school. In the absence of a birth certificate or identity card, it is difficult for these children to enroll to school; in some cases they are legally invisible. Research on Roma participation in schools sections and clubs in 11 different locations revealed that only one school has instituted additional help to enroll children without birth certificate or personal identification number. That school's staff assists parents and children to obtain the documents as instructed by the line ministry.

### ***Political grounds for social exclusion***

Political exclusion is another form of social exclusion. Functioning democratic societies not only create mechanisms for marginalized groups to channel their political preferences, but they also encourage them to use these mechanisms through persistent information and awareness campaigns. Furthermore, the political parties and interest groups also compete for the support of all the groups including those with a weak political voice. However, in the absence of a well-functioning democracy and in the presence of cultural and social discrimination against Roma and Egyptian communities by the majority, the young Roma and Egyptians are not involved in the decision making.<sup>12</sup> Participatory action research in the city of Korça, Albania found that 54 percent of the respondents perceived all young people as uninvolved in decision-making. Fifty-nine percent of the respondents perceive young Roma as uninvolved in decision making. Non-probability convenience sampling suggests that these statistics may not accurately reflect people's opinion on that topic. Face-to-face interviews with the chief administrator of the region, mayor of Korça municipality and the Chairman of the University Senate reveal that there has not been sufficient efforts to involve and include young people in decision-making. There has been a lack of initiatives to inform young people about activities and events taking place in their community. However, the interviewees point out that the Roma and Egyptian communities have not organized themselves to present common problems as a group. They usually present problems that are common to their community individually. Those remarks suggest that there is a lot to be done to create or strengthen Roma and Egyptians community organizations to present and defend their concerns publically.

## Ability and Social Exclusion

The Convention on the Rights of the Child recognizes that the degree of a child's ability can become a serious ground for social exclusion and discrimination. In Article 23 it singles out disabled children and obligates the signatory parties to provide special care for the disabled child in order to ensure dignity, self-reliance and facilitate the child's active participation in the community.<sup>13</sup> The LYRA action research team in Gjakova, Kosovo/o, researched special needs children's access to inclusive education. The Strategic Plan for Organizing Inclusive Education for Children with Special Educational Needs in Pre-University in Kosovo/o (2010-2015)<sup>14</sup> and Kosovo/o's Strategic National Education Plan (2011-2016)<sup>15</sup> show that early identification and intervention to increase inclusion of children with special needs has entered the agenda of the Kosovar government. As part of these plans, 300 primary education teachers were trained in innovative teaching methods for children with special needs and some schools have begun to improve their infrastructure to make inclusive education possible. These schools will later be used as models for existing schools to transition into inclusive education schools where children with special needs and those without such needs will be in the same classrooms. "The Faculty of Higher Education requires that education students take inclusive education courses at both the Bachelor's level and graduate level."<sup>16</sup> With the initiative of *Save the Children*, during 2013 the Faculty of Education has begun its collaboration with the University of Bologna, Italy, to assess and revise the curricula for inclusive education and to establish a Master's Degree program for Inclusive Education.<sup>17</sup> *Save the Children* has also provided assistance to local public and non-public institutions to improve situation of children with special needs. Yet the current situation of special needs children in educational settings calls for greater attention and work at all levels: national, local, institutional and family.

Findings about inclusion of special needs children in the schooling system are based only on databases of beneficiaries of HandiKOS<sub>18</sub> and One-to-One in Gjakova. The LYRA team surveyed parents of 205 children with special needs aged 2 to 20 years and six primary schools that those children attended. Almost half (47%) of the surveyed children have a physical disability, but less than 50% of them have an orthopedic device or wheelchair. Only three of the surveyed schools have horizontal access (children have physical access to classrooms and other facilities on the ground floor) and only one school has vertical access for children with special physical needs (children have access to the upper floors).

The rest of the special needs children for which data was collected had the following disabilities: 24% have some mental disability, 10% have visual impairment, 9% have the Down's Syndrome, 7% have a speaking impairment and 3% have autism. One third of children with special needs for whom data was collected do not attend school. In addition to financial reasons, lack of personal assistance (48 percent), denial of admission by the school management (25 percent), lack of infrastructure (8 percent) and lack of textbooks (8 percent) are the main reasons that special needs children do not attend school.

The LYRA team in Gjakova found that children with special needs, whether physical or mental, have additional hurdles to become socially included. They are excluded from education, because of poverty, absence of infrastructure, trained personnel and mentality. Such exclusion whether structural, cultural or social prevents children with special needs to participate fully in academic, social, civil and economic life. In such situations, special needs children are denied the opportunity to access fully their fundamental rights.

### ***Gender and Social Exclusion***

The LYRA teams identified two ways in which gender constitutes the foundation of social exclusion. One way is early marriage as a phenomenon that is mostly a phenomenon affecting girls. The other way gender serves as a ground for social exclusion is school attendance. In some communities fewer girls attend school compared to boys.

Early marriage,<sup>19</sup> is a phenomenon that is present in the Kosovar society, especially among the Roma communities<sup>20</sup> even though the Family Law of the Republic of Kosova/o clearly states that a person can be legally married only upon reaching the age of majority (18 years) and that a union of marriage between 16 and 18 years old can only be legal if approved by a judge after an evaluation of physical and physiological maturity of the minors and hearing the opinions of their custodians.<sup>21</sup> Early marriage is closely associated with gender issues, because this phenomenon is more widespread among girls than boys. Overall, early marriage impairs young girls from reaching their full potential and full participation in the social, economic and political life of their community. It places girls in economic, educational, health and psychological disadvantages. Early marriage denies school age girls the opportunity for further education, personal growth and professional lives beyond that of a homemaker. Even if married girls would want to continue their

education, practically they are excluded from doing so because they have to do house chores, to work in order to help their family or take care of their newborns. They are usually in an economic disadvantage because they have neither education nor skills that are associated with certain levels of education to compete in the labor market for well-paid jobs. Early marriage is also associated with early pregnancy which has a negative effect on young mothers' health and the quality of care for their newborns.

The survey conducted by the LYRA team in seven neighborhoods in Prizren, Kosovo/o confirms that early marriages are widespread among the Roma communities and that it is more a girls' rather than a boys' phenomenon. The survey data shows that 34% of respondents got married at an age younger than 18 years and 65% of them were girls. Over 76% of male respondents declared that their partner was younger than 18 years old when they got married, while less than 27% of women state the same thing. Around 63% of respondents believe that early marriages are prevalent in their neighborhood. In addition to financial difficulties which are discussed in a previous section, traditions, customs and mentality are among the main reasons for early marriages.

Early marriage is a phenomenon that has its roots in the culture and tradition of the Roma people. However, culture and tradition should not be seen as unchangeable and thus the only culprit for the occurrence of child marriages. Variables like economic deprivation and illiteracy, especially of mothers, have an important contribution in the perpetuation of early marriages. The prevalence of early marriages has decreased in countries and strata of societies as the education level has increased and poverty has been alleviated.

## CHAPTER IV

# EDUCATION

In 1954, 36 years before the CRC entered into force, *Brown versus Board of Education* in the U.S.A. recognized education as the foundation of a successful and productive life:

*Today, education is perhaps the most important function of state and local governments. Compulsory school attendance laws and the great expenditures for education both demonstrate our recognition of the importance of education to our democratic society. It is required in the performance of our most basic public responsibilities, even service in the armed forces. It is the very foundation of good citizenship. Today it is a principal instrument in awakening the child to cultural values, in preparing him for later professional training, and in helping him to adjust normally to his environment. In these days, it is doubtful that any child may reasonably be expected to succeed in life if he is denied the opportunity of an education. Such an opportunity, where the state has undertaken to provide it, is a right which must be made available to all on equal terms.*<sup>22</sup>

Today, 193 countries have ratified or accessed the Convention on the Rights of the Child which fully dedicates articles 28 and 29 to a child's right to education, specifying also state duties to make compulsory and secondary education accessible to all and to institute policies that increase school attendance and reduce dropout rates. Article 23 of the CRC mandates states with tasks to provide education for disabled children and articles 2 and 30 require any minority group to be treated equally. Even though the governments of the three countries have included Roma education in their plans and strategies, the statistics (sometimes incomplete or inaccurate), qualitative studies and information from organizations working with Roma populations paint a dire situation

regarding Roma's level of education. Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians have significantly lower rates of enrollment in school and completion of compulsory education, and higher rates of dropout and truancy compared to non-Roma populations.

In **Albania**, only **34 percent of Roma** are enrolled in **pre-school education system** compared to 57 percent on the non-Roma population. In **compulsory education**, the Roma enrollment rate is **48 percent** compared to 91 percent for non-Roma. Mean years of schooling for an Albanian Roma is 4.4 years while it is 9.6 years for non-Roma.<sup>23</sup>

In **Bosnia and Herzegovina**, data from 2007 suggest that only **50 percent of Roma** school-aged children attend school compared to 92.8-98.9 percent of the general population. Only 20 percent of Roma that graduate compulsory education enroll in upper secondary education compared to 56.8-76 percent of the general population.<sup>24</sup>

Data about the Roma population only in **Kosova/o** show that **32.4 percent** of Roma completed primary education in 2004.<sup>25</sup> The UNDP data show that in 2004 among Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian populations, 75 percent attend primary education, 25 percent attend secondary education and *only 1.4% attend or finish high school*.<sup>26</sup> Regarding literacy rates, the UNDP reports that 65 percent of Roma between 15 and 24 years old and 76 percent of Roma between 25-34 years old are literate compared to 98 percent of the non-Roma population.<sup>27</sup>

There is consensus among scholars and practitioners in the fields of education and social sciences that the level of education is among the most important factors determining an individual's future status of employment, income level, health, their offspring's health and development, and their status in the society. Having this in mind, the LYRA action research teams focused specifically on education. In Bosnia Herzegovina and Kosova/o, the action research findings confirm that there is a huge gap in educational achievement between Roma and non-Roma communities. There is a high rate of illiteracy and dropout during primary school, few Roma continue and complete their secondary education and very few Roma attend extracurricular activities in their schools or clubs in their areas. Reasons for dropping out of school can be grouped into economic (poverty and unemployment), cultural (early marriages and not enough value attached to education) and attitudes of the majority of population toward the Roma population (discriminatory and exclusionary).

Data from Save the Children Bosnia and Herzegovina National Action Research Report (2014) show that 8.73 percent of the respondents are illiterate and 16.87 percent have not attended school in the past and are possibly illiterate. A little over 13 percent have dropped out of primary school, 28.31 have completed primary school, 19.88 percent have completed secondary education, 11.44 have attended some vocational or other form of education after completing primary school, and 1.50 percent have attended higher education or graduate school. Whenever asked about participation in extracurricular activities or clubs, the majority of Bosnian Roma report that they do not attend them either because of lack of information, parent's indifference, lack of awareness or lack of financial means to pay fees.

**Table 4.1. Level of education and literacy of survey respondents in Bosnia and Herzegovina by cities**

Level of education/ Literacy	Banja Luka		Bijeljina		Mostar <sup>28</sup>		Sarajevo		Tuzla		Total	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
Illiterate	n / a	n / a	23	46	n / a	n / a	n / a	n / a	6	8.96	29	8.73
Did not attend school	12	30,77	n / a	n / a	29	22,14	15 <sup>29</sup>	30	n / a	n / a	56	16,87
Incomplete primary education	n / a	n / a	4	8	15	11,45	14	28	11	16,42	44	13,25
Primary education	6	15,38	17	34	26	19,85	19 <sup>30</sup>	38	26	38,81	94	28,31
Three-year vocational school	7	17,95	n / a	n / a	n / a	n / a	n / a	n / a	n / a	n / a	7	2,11
Secondary school	12	30,77	5	10	28	21,37	2	4	24	35,82	66	19,88
University	1	2.56	1	2	2	1.53	n / a	n / a	n / a	n / a	4	1.20
Graduate	1	2.56	n / a	n / a		n / a	n / a	n / a	n / a	n / a	1	.30
Some other form of education	n / a	n / a	n / a	n / a	31	23,66	n / a	n / a	n / a	n / a	31	9.34
N	39	100	50	100	131	100	50	100	67	100	332	100

Data from Kosova/o National Action Research Report show that in Prizren, 16 percent of Roma children for which information was collected (either directly or through their parents) have not attended school, most of whom have been out of school for over one year. In the same town, over 32 percent of respondents of the early marriages survey reported not to have completed compulsory education, 11 percent were illiterate, 44 percent had completed primary school and 20.2 percent have completed secondary school. In Gjakova, about 33 percent of the identified special needs children are not attending education at all. Of those attending education, 38 percent attend education in mainstream classrooms, 43 percent in special classes in mainstream schools and 19 percent in schools for special needs children. In Gjakova, Kosova/o, 34 percent of Roma children do not attend Albanian language, English language or math courses offered as extracurricular activities.

Poor education of the Roma population is a stark reality closely connected to poor economic conditions, unemployment, discrimination, social exclusion and sometimes indifference from Roma parents regarding their children's educations. Most likely current education policies even when designed with the aim of inclusion of Roma and other vulnerable groups have not been very effective in achieving that goal. In order to increase the level of education of young Roma, it is necessary to ensure Roma involvement in cross-cutting programs addressing the abovementioned issues.



# MAKING A CASE FOR YOUNG ROMA EMPOWERMENT

The LYRA project participants and managers can look back to the days they were planning this regional project and wondering whether that will bring about the change they intended. Two years later, a network of young Roma and non-Roma across the three countries are actively working to grow as teams and individually. As teams they are seeking to reach programmatic goals that brought them together: Roma non-discrimination and social inclusion. Individually, each participant has acquired practical skills that make her/him a more productive and active member of the society; has acquired self-confidence and self-respect; and overall, many of them know what they want to do with their lives. Those individual and team gains need further fostering and creation of a broader network within and between the three countries in order to make them sustainable. The rest of this chapter brings few of those team and individual achievements as testimonies of the tangible and non-tangible impact that LYRA project has made on those young people and their communities; and as supporting evidence that such interventions can work and must be encouraged in the future.

### **Albania**

#### **“A youth center for all”**

The Albanian LYRA action research team in town of Roskovec advocated for young Roma and non-Roma to have a space where to organize activities that will bring together young people of all ethnic backgrounds. The focus group organized to identify the main problems

faced by the Roma community pointed out to common problems such as discrimination, unemployment, poor job skills, poor education and health care services, poverty and lack of recreational activities and places to have such activities. Lack of recreational activities and space seemed like the least of young Roma problems in Roskovec. Yet, The LYRA action research team focused on advocating for establishing a youth center for three main reasons. Firstly, they could use that space to plan and organize recreational activities, thus helping building a positive and hopeful environment. Secondly, that space could be used as a place where young Roma and non-Roma spend time and work together, thus getting to know each-other in a common setting, help decrease distrust and enhance understanding between Roma and non-Roma communities. Last but not least, there was a higher chance of success advocating for an issue that was dependent on the local authorities than for nation-wide issues that involve a myriad of institutions and advocacy organizations.

The LYRA action research team in Roskovec found that there were not many potential publicly-owned spaces that could serve as a youth center. The House of Culture in Roskovec was the most appropriate place to start a youth center. The LYRA research action team targeted the municipality of Roskovec, the mayor and the municipal council, for their advocacy work, because the municipality administers the House of Culture. In a joint meeting with the Mayor and Municipal Council of Roskovec, the LYRA research action team presented their focus group findings about the current situation of young Roma and non-Roma. They emphasized the need for a youth center and presented reasons why such a center is beneficial to the entire community in the town of Roskovec. The Mayor of Roskovec supported by the Municipal Council acknowledged that absence of a recreational youth center was long overdue. Later, one of the rooms in the House of Culture was assigned as a youth center.

The LYRA action research team in Roskovec while celebrating the success of their advocacy work, also acknowledges that this is only the first step. They have to furnish their center and make it functional. However, at the end of their first research action project they felt better equipped to address problems they face. They have learned how to identify and analyze a problem, identify solution, design action plans and act accordingly. What is most important, they have put into practice each step and reaped the fruits of their hard work.

## Bosnia and Herzegovina<sub>31</sub>

**Lyra** (*l'laɪərə*; Latin for lyre, from Greek [λύρα] is a small constellation. It is one of the 48 listed by the 2nd century astronomer Ptolemy, and is one of the 88 constellations recognized by the International Astronomical Union. Its principal star, Vega (Abhijit in Sanskrit), a corner of the Summer Triangle, is one of the brightest stars in the sky.

### Internship: A chance for success

Finding the brightest stars in the sky - that was the idea behind the LYRA (Leaders – Young Roma in Action) project implemented in three countries: Albania, Kosova/o and Bosnia and Herzegovina; to find the stars among the Roma youth, the future leaders of the Roma communities in these countries.

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, the process was not easy – it was difficult to find the candidates who would fulfill an entire set of criteria defined by the project, so in some cases we needed to consider applicants that did not meet requirements regarding level of education, age, etc. Once we identified youth with potential, the success of the project was almost guaranteed. In five cities of the country, Sarajevo, Tuzla, Banja Luka, Bijeljina and Mostar, we established a core group of 18 young Roma leaders, three in each city, who were capable of leading and engaging a wider group of 75 Roma and non-Roma youth to carry out local action research and advocate for the improvement of the situation for Roma in their local communities. After a series of trainings and mentorships, the 18 young Roma leaders were empowered and strengthened to engage in activities and tasks foreseen by the project, but also to take the leading roles in their communities. They were given an additional opportunity to do so through the *internship* program facilitated by Save the Children. Prior to entering the internship program, Save the Children provided them with a training on how to present themselves in a business environment, how to write a CV and a motivational letter.

***“The internship program organized through LYRA project is a one of a kind intervention with young Roma in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It was a unique opportunity for these young people to work, to get paid for their work and to prove themselves to the employers, which they did very well”*** states Amir Basic, LYRA project officer in Save the Children. Save the Children engaged in intensive lobbying and negotiations with local civil society organizations, companies and public institutions in the targeted cities to finally obtain the commitment from six organizations, five NGOs and one public institution, to take on board 10 young Roma leaders as their full-time staff members for a period of at least three months. The selection of applicants was competitive. ***“The 18 candidates were asked to write their CVs and motivational letters and to submit those to the prospective employers. The employers then decided, based on the received applications, who they wished to employ,”*** Amir Basic explains.

And so it happened that the selected youth have proved themselves as great employees: eager to learn and make a good impression. They made sure to utilize well the opportunity they were given and for all of them this paid off: they were offered the possibility to continue working for the organizations in which they worked as interns. Seven young Roma: Almir and Fatima in Bijeljina, Denis in Tuzla, Albert and Ermin in Mostar and Dragana and Mersiha in Banja Luka continued working for the organizations after the completion of the internship assignment, either as full-time staff members or as volunteers. One of them, Bahrudina in Tuzla, thanks to the skills she gained and qualities she proved, is now employed in an organization different than the one where she carried out her internship. Ramiz from Sarajevo was promised continuation of work as soon as some additional funds are secured by the public *Service for Prevention, Reception and Protection of Children at Risk* where he was an intern for five months.

***“For sure young Roma improved and made changes in their lives. It is very important to us that they will stay to work in the Roma communities, with the Roma children,”*** says Andrea Zeravic, director of Save the Children in North West Balkans.

### **An opportunity is worth more than a thousand words**

***“My goal is to be a man on my own; to get on my own two feet. Save the Children staff helped me a lot. Thanks to them, I was able to work and earn my own money,”***

starts Ramiz Spasoli the story of his involvement with Save the Children. Ramiz is 20 years old. He is Roma. He was born and brought up in Sarajevo. His life with 4 brothers and 2 sisters, with only his father employed is far from easy. They are now 18 people in one household, with the brothers' and sisters' families included.

Ramiz always wanted to go to school. He was the first and only one of his siblings to go to school. After completing primary school, where he was a very good student, he also attended high school. ***“I wished so much to get an education. I completed secondary vocational education, although this was a bit more difficult than primary school, because at that time my brother’s kids started going to school. We did not have enough money for all of us. I wanted them to have everything they needed, so there was not enough money to buy my textbooks from which I could study,”*** explains Ramiz. Nevertheless, although with lower grades, Ramiz also completed his secondary education.

Recommended by one of his teachers, Ramiz got involved in the LYRA project at its inception. He was one of the three young Roma leaders identified in Sarajevo. This was the first project that he ever participated. He did not have prior contact with the NGO sector. But Ramiz proved to be an excellent choice. He showed great dedication to the project, to the team and to the given tasks.

After completing a course on to learn how to write a CV and a motivation letter organized by Save the Children, Ramiz submitted his application to the Disciplinary Centre, a public institution with mandate to work with children in contact with the law, street involved children and children at risk. The Centre runs the *Service for Prevention, Reception and Protection of Children at Risk*, the former Drop-in Centre for Street Involved children established by Save the Children and the Centre for Social Work of Canton Sarajevo, which later become part of the social protection system of the Canton, through integration into the Disciplinary Centre. The Centre selected Ramiz to become a member of their team for the following five months.

***“At the beginning, I didn’t know what exactly I needed to do. I thought I wouldn’t be able to do it. But thanks to my colleagues who encouraged me to get involved I started doing everything I could. After those five months, we all became very***

*close, the staff at the Service, the children beneficiaries and myself. The experience of working at the Centre changed me a lot. I met different people and I can see how my thinking has changed”* says Ramiz about his internship experience. *“I stopped working because currently there is no more money available, but they promised that they will look for options to keep me on board;”* he continues.

*“I am very glad that Ramiz had acquired a certain degree of self-confidence while working at the Service and recognized his own qualities that he never even knew he possessed,”* says Selma Cokalovic, expert associate at the Service, who mentored Ramiz during his internship. *“He is a positive male figure and as such was of extreme importance for the children coming to our Centre;”* continues Selma.

According to Save the Children’s Amir Basic: *“Ramiz showed distinct affinity with children, and a great pedagogical approach. He has probably shown the greatest progress among all the Roma youth in Bosnia and Herzegovina involved in Save the Children’s LYRA project.”* Save the Children will continue working and advocating to find a more permanent solution to Ramiz’s employment.

## **Kosova/o**

***“Fatlum is part of perception changing towards the Roma community<sup>32</sup>”***

In Kosova/o, the transition of young Roma from childhood to adulthood is obstructed by a lack of opportunities within and outside their communities, as well as difficulties in accessing their human rights, as they face structural discrimination and marginalization. Prejudices and stereotypes are widely spread and often remain unquestioned in politics and society.

*“Today, for the most part, Roma are perceived as people who only know how to collect cans and are only seen near the garbage bins. I want to change the perception of how the Roma community is seen and remove the stereotypes”* says Fatlum Kryeziu, a 20 year old Roma youth from the city of Prizren, Kosova/o.

Fatlum is now part of the Leaders - Young Roma in Action (LYRA) regional project implemented in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo/o. As one of the 60 Roma and non-Roma young leaders, the project aims to empower the leaders to identify common problems related to social exclusion and discrimination that the Roma face, and draft feasible activities to address these problems through exchange of ideas and experiences, and the establishment of cross-border networks of cooperation, engagement in the civil society and advocacy with state institutions and international mechanisms that deal with Roma issues.

Living in a family of six, Fatlum grew up in a mostly Roma populated neighborhood in Prizren, which is a very poor and undeveloped. *“My father worked as a musician and was away all the time, I would spend a lot of time at my grandmother’s as she would spoil me. My mother though was my rock, and despite the fact that she only finished her 8<sup>th</sup> grade, she always supported me when it came to schooling and pushed me to do better in school and be active in making changes possible. She is my “lioness”* say Fatlum.

Relatively low attention of national and international policies to the specific Roma youth problems, makes it extremely challenging for young Roma to effectively engage in and become civic leaders of change. The main way of halting the vicious cycle and gaining positive representation within the society is to enhance the social inclusion and active citizenship of Roma young people. Increasing the ability of Roma youth to participate in social and community life in an organized manner is a critical issue.

Fatlum’s involvement with the LYRA project in 2013 initially began as a volunteer and in 2014 was chosen as a leader. He was part of the Participatory Action Research conducted in 2013, where in Prizren, they looked at the areas of Roma school dropouts and early marriages. Upon completion of the discussions, the youngsters and organization members proposed recommendations for immediate activities to be organized in the community to address the identified problems. These findings, which Fatlum delivered for those conducted in the city of Prizren, were then shared both at local and at national level, with representatives of various institutions, including the media.

***“Being part of the project really built my skills in research, drafting of questionnaires and how to raise my voice and push forward certain issues, such as addressing the Ombudsperson. I believe it is important to invest in education and training in order to create job opportunities, because that is the main way you can reduce discrimination. Much of the integration happens because of the need and not necessarily just of the law in place. For example, if you are the best baker in town, they do not care what you are as long as you are the best in town, they will come to you.”***

Fatlum says that he wants to be an inspiration for others and make changes possible for those in his community through the project and more. He will continue finishing his studies in both Law School and the Music School, while attaining additional skills by doing a three month internship with the Ministry of Agriculture in Kosova/o.





# CONCLUSIONS

- I. Data from action research in Albania, Bosnia Herzegovina and Kosova/o points to common problems faced by young Roma, Egyptian and Ashkali in these three countries: discrimination, social exclusion and poor education. Research methods and instruments were different from one country to another and direct comparison is not possible. Yet, the fact that conclusions regarding Roma perceptions and opinions about their problems and potential causes of those problems converged lays foundations for common regional action. This convergence indicates that regional action research can more effectively tackle common regional problems.
- II. LYRA researchers found that societal and individual discrimination against Roma, Egyptian and Ashkali are widespread in Albania, Bosnia Herzegovina and Kosova/o. There are neither legally nor institutionally entrenched in discriminatory laws, regulations or policies in these countries. Yet, there is anecdotal evidence that prejudicial individuals, whether they are aware or not, working in public institutions and enabled by widespread societal prejudice against Roma, Egyptian and Ashkali populations use discriminatory practices or hold discriminatory views against Roma. Some institutional representatives expressed a strictly legal perspective of the discrimination against Roma, thus neglecting discrimination going on in Roma's lives.
- III. Lack of understanding and awareness on the part of the Roma populations regarding conceptual and practiced discrimination against them most likely has its roots in a long history of discrimination against them coupled by low levels of Roma education, low civic engagement and abject poverty. In such a context, non-discriminatory

laws and policies are not sufficient to break the cycle of discrimination against Roma populations. Increased understanding and awareness of what is discrimination and how discrimination against Roma is practiced by Roma and non-Roma populations is the key to remedy the current situation.

- IV. Gender discrimination with roots in culture and economic conditions occurs among the Roma, Egyptian and Ashkali populations. Girls are subject to early marriages significantly more often than boys in Roma communities in Albania, Bosnia Herzegovina and Kosovo/o. As a result, school dropout occurs at an earlier age and perhaps more often among Roma girls than Roma boys. Furthermore, social exclusion of Roma girls is likely to encompass more dimensions and to reach deeper than exclusion of Roma boys.
- V. Discrimination against and segregation of young Roma occurs in schools even though such phenomena are not institutionalized. Teachers, whether aware or not, act in such a way that many young Roma feel discriminated against even though they may not necessarily call it discrimination. Further systematic research may be necessary to tease out the presence of discrimination against Roma students at schools, because acceptance of legally punishable and ethically unacceptable occurrences such as discrimination based on ethnicity is not likely to be openly admitted by teachers and education administrators.
- VI. Lack of data disaggregated by ethnicity or poor quality data on ethnic groups lays the ground for discrimination against Roma and policies that most likely do not accurately address problems faced by the Roma populations. Evidence-based policies call for higher quality data disaggregated by ethnicity.
- VII. Social exclusion of young Roma, Egyptian and Ashkali occurs on economic, identity, ability, gender and political grounds. Across countries, most young Roma and their families live in poverty, with little prospects for legal employment. Self-employment predominates among Roma populations. On one side, self-employment in the grey economy, mostly in collection of recyclable materials and trade, raises concerns regarding work safety and conditions, low margin of profit, exploitation and illegality of the employment. On the other side, the large percentage of self-employment among

Roma reveals their entrepreneurial spirit and initiative, which must be encouraged and supported by enhancing their business management skills. Young Roma must be encouraged to continue either general or vocational education in order to gain skills that can increase their employability.

- VIII. LYRA action researchers have uncovered two ways in which identity feeds Roma social exclusion. One is just by virtue of having a different ethnic identity. The general population holds prejudicial and exclusionary views. The other is related to identity and travel cards, the lack of which occurs either due to lack of information or foreign citizenship. Regardless of the nature of the causes of the absence of identity and travel cards, Roma that cannot obtain or do not know where and how to obtain them are excluded from education institutions, having health insurance, traveling or conducting anything that requires an identity or travel card.
- IX. Young Roma are not involved in local decision-making. This is recognized by the decision-makers and laypersons who express the need for young Roma and non-Roma involvement in local decision-making.
- X. Disability is an important ground for social exclusion in education. While laws and policies are conducive to social inclusion, there is a need for these laws and policies to be implemented and integrated in the educational systems in areas such as infrastructure, pedagogy and peer interactions.
- XI. Early marriages are widespread among Roma populations. This phenomenon is associated with high levels of school dropout among those getting married. The gender dimension in early marriages is particularly strong. Significantly more Roma girls than Roma boys enter into early marriage. As a result, either due to sheer probability or chores that are associated with women, entering into marriage in a Roma family, more girls drop out of school than boys due to early marriages. The effects of early marriages, however, are broader than just school dropout. They are associated with low work skills, low civic engagement and low capacity to exercise their rights.

XII. Education is an overarching theme in discrimination and social exclusion of young Roma. Young Roma complete less school years than young non-Roma; they have higher dropout rates and truancy than non-Roma; and they participate significantly less in extracurricular activities than non-Roma. In a nutshell, young Roma get less out of the existing educational systems than young non-Roma do. Si pjesë e procesit, pjesëmarrësit LYRA rekomanduan qasje të ndryshme, të politikave dhe veprimeve për të adresuar problemet që identifikuan dhe për të përfunduar aksionet që tashmë kanë ndërmarrë.



## RECOMMENDATIONS

### I. Policy Recommendations

As part of the process, the LYRA participants recommended several approaches, policies and actions to address the problems they identified and to complete actions they have already taken.

Those recommendations were further developed to include the following:

- Young Roma and other vulnerable discriminated and socially excluded groups should become aware that they will be able to succeed only when they take the driver's seat in the fight against discrimination and social exclusion. This means that, individually and as groups, young Roma must demand to be treated as equals to their fellow citizens and simultaneously must seize the opportunities provided by the legal system and public policies to improve their education, vocational and health status in their societies.
- Social exclusion and discrimination against young Roma are multidimensional phenomena and dimensions and intertwined with one another. Furthermore, these dimensions appear to operate at national, regional and local levels. This calls for harmonized multi-sectoral and multi-level interventions that acknowledge and address these problems as a whole while accounting for the specific contexts in which they take place.
- Collection of new high quality and disaggregated data by ethnicity, gender, age and regions and use of existing data on Roma, Egyptian and Ashkali populations in order to advocate for evidence-based policy making.

- Sustainability of Roma, Egyptian and Ashkali actions to improve their lives and reduce discrimination can be ensured only when a critical mass of young people from these communities have the knowledge and skills to initiate, implement and finalize projects on their own.
- Awareness programs focused on an increased understanding of children's rights and, by extension, human rights, an increased ability of Roma and non-Roma people to recognize discrimination and exclusion in public places, and increased interactions among Roma and non-Roma populations can improve the context in which non-discrimination and inclusion policies can work more effectively and efficiently.
- Whenever there is no citizens' consultative group attached to the elected City Councils, young Roma and non-Roma can initiate establishment of one and use it as a channel to voice their concerns, issues and solutions for problems their communities face in their daily lives.
- Work on empowering the young Roma, Egyptian and Ashkali should not be limited to young people only. Work with their parents, and especially their mothers, is necessary to build the adequate support for young Roma empowerment.
- Regional action research in the future should use unified methodology and instruments in order to ensure cross-country comparability and stronger foundations for regional policy and advocacy actions.

## II. Action Plan Recommendations

The LYRA regional advocacy plan suggests **three main pillars** on which young Roma and non-Roma should focus:

1. Reducing discrimination of young Roma in education through increased multicultural exchanges and identification and correction of cases of Roma discrimination.
2. Promoting social inclusion for Roma children and Youth at the local, national and regional level.
3. Providing information to Roma communities about the value of civil registration and the procedures that must be followed; and informing public officials of their obligations to communicate and register all births in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosova/o.

To achieve these objectives LYRA network should work to expand and sustain itself. Close cooperation with existing networks, movements and organization that have already been involved in the Roma Decade activities or that are interested to get involved in improving Roma situation will be conducive to effective coordination, avoidance of duplication and wasteful activities and as a result ensure efficient use of financial and human resources to achieve the stated goals.

Use of integrated approaches to achieve the stated goals can be more effective and efficient than approaching each goal separately. More concretely, lectures that will be designed to tackle issues of Roma discrimination in schools, social exclusion and low levels of Roma registration in the civil registry should integrate these topics together in order to reach the largest number of children and teachers in shortest time and least resources.

While civil registration of Roma children campaign may require an approach focused mostly on procedures on how to register a child in a civil registry, it is important to raise

awareness among Roma children and parents that civil registration is a stepping stone in reducing discrimination and exclusion of young Roma.

Lobbying of stakeholders, from relevant ministries to school boards or teachers, should be associated with concrete and feasible proposals for action in order to increase the odds of positive involvement of stakeholders in response to the advocacy campaign.

A combination of carefully implemented educational approach, vicarious experience approach, intergroup contact approach and promotion of positive and intergroup relations approach<sub>33</sub> can help achieve all the three goals and sustain gains over time.





## ENDNOTES

- 1 Action Research is a method of engagement by which groups can come together to share experiences and learn through collective reflection and analysis. It involves using a cycle of planning, taking action, observing, evaluating (including self – evaluation) and critical reflection prior to planning the next step. Features of this research approach are as follows:  
the focus is on research aimed to enable action (*participants collect and process data, and decide on further actions accordingly*);  
attention is drawn to relations between the person who is conducting the research and those who are the subject of research. Contrary to other approaches and methodologies, those who are the subject of research in the action research approach are considered *partners* who can influence the selection of research topics, data collection, etc. (*before determining the research topic, young leaders have consulted with members of the Roma community*);  
the process is led by members of the group who have an interest in the issue that is the subject of the research;  
cooperation is the key in every stage of the process, including discussions and joint work;  
the result of the research is a concrete action, a change or improvement in relation to the issue that is the research subject.
- 2 Hereafter, the term “Roma” is used to describe, without discrimination, all Romani groups: Roma, Egyptian and Ashkali, travelers or settlers present in the targeted countries.
- 3 Kore, Zini. 2014. Action Research: Albanian National Report, LYRA Young Roma in Action. Save the Children, Albania.
- 4 Save the Children. 2014. Report on Conducted Action Research, Young Roma in Action, Bosnia Herzegovina.
- 5 Elezaj, Erbëlina. 2014. Participatory Action Research. Save the Children, Kosova/o.
- 6 Kore, Zini. 2014. Action Research: Albanian National Report, LYRA Young Roma in Action. Save the Children, Albania
- 7 E-mail communication with Amir Bašić, LYRA Team Leader, Save the Children, Bosnia Herzegovina.

- 8 Sex, origin and opinion will not be stated when talking about discrimination with the understanding that discrimination occurs based on one or a combination of these three characteristics.
- 9 Shehan, Frances and Lindvall, Monica. 2008. Translating the Right to Non-Discrimination into Reality: A Mapping of Save the Children Sweden's Work on their Right to Non-discrimination. Save the Children, Sweden.
- 10 Elezaj, Erëblina. National Action Research Report of Kosova/o, p. 36.
- 11 Council of the European Union. 2001. Joint Report on Social Inclusion. Document 15223/01. Accessed on September 13, 2014 at [http://ec.europa.eu/employment\\_social/soc-prot/soc-incl/15223/part1\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/employment_social/soc-prot/soc-incl/15223/part1_en.pdf).
- 12 In 2007 Local Elections in Albania, the Roma community in the city of Elbasan mobilized, campaigned for and elected the first Roma in the Elbasan City Council. Currently, there is no representative of this community in Elbasan City Council.
- 13 Convention on the Rights of the Child, United Nations, Office of the High Commissioner of the Human Rights. Retrieved at <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CRC.aspx>
- 14 Kosovo Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. 2010. The Strategic Plan for Organizing Inclusive Education for Children with Special Educational Needs in Pre-University in Kosovo (2010-2015). Retrieved at [http://www.masht-gov.net/advCms/documents/Strategic\\_plan%20for\\_organizing\\_inclusive\\_education\\_for\\_children\\_with\\_special\\_educational\\_needs\\_in\\_pre\\_university\\_education\\_2010\\_2015.pdf](http://www.masht-gov.net/advCms/documents/Strategic_plan%20for_organizing_inclusive_education_for_children_with_special_educational_needs_in_pre_university_education_2010_2015.pdf).
- 15 Kosovo Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. 2011. Kosovo Education Strategic Plan (2011-2016). Retrieved at [http://www.entwicklung.at/uploads/media/2c\\_Kosovo\\_Education\\_Strategic\\_Plan\\_EN\\_FINAL\\_DRAFT.pdf](http://www.entwicklung.at/uploads/media/2c_Kosovo_Education_Strategic_Plan_EN_FINAL_DRAFT.pdf)
- 16 UNICEF. 2012. The Right of Children with Disabilities to Education: A Rights-Based Approach to Inclusive Education. p.80. Retrieved at [http://www.unicef.org/ceecis/IEPositionPaper\\_ENGLISH.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/ceecis/IEPositionPaper_ENGLISH.pdf).
- 17 Elezaj, Erëblina. 2014. Participatory Action Research. Save the Children in Kosova/o, Pristina: Kosova/o.
- 18 HandiKOS is an association of paraplegics and paralyzed children of Kosovo. This organization's mission is to prevent disability, promote and provide services to the disabled and to identify and ensure full participation of persons with disabilities.
- 19 Early marriage is defined as legal or common law union of two persons, in which at least one of them is under eighteen years of age.

- 20 KKosovar Foundation for Open Society (KFOS). 2012. UNFPA. 2012. Child Marriage. Retrieved from <http://unfpa.org/webdav/site/eeca/shared/documents/publications/KOSOVO%20-%20English.pdf>.
- 21 Assembly of Kosovo. 2004. Family Law of Kosovo. Retrieved from [http://assembly-kosova.org/common/docs/ligjet/2004\\_32\\_al.pdf](http://assembly-kosova.org/common/docs/ligjet/2004_32_al.pdf). Article 15. Capacity for Marriage (1) The capacity to enter into wedlock is obtained with full capacity to act. (2) Majority is obtained upon the completion of the eighteenth year of age. (3) Full capacity to act is obtained upon reaching majority or by entering into wedlock prior to this age. 2. Marriage Requirements Article 16. Conditions for Entering into Wedlock (1) A person who has not reached the age of eighteen shall not enter into wedlock. (2) Due to justifiable reasons, the court may allow wedlock for a minor person older than sixteen years upon his request, if it concludes that the person has reached the necessary physical and psychological maturity for exercising his marital rights and to fulfill his marital obligations. (3) Prior to the decision, the court shall seek the opinion of the Custodian Body and shall hear from the minor and his parents/custodian. The court shall also hear the person with whom the minor intends to enter into wedlock and shall investigate other circumstances important for the decision.
- 22 Brown v. Board of Education, 347 U.S. 483 (1954).
- 23 UNDP, World Bank and EC. 2012. Roma in Albania. Retrieved from <http://www.al.undp.org/content/dam/albania/docs/misc/Roma%20in%20%20Albania%20June%202012%20profile.pdf>
- 24 Roma Education Fund. 2009. Advancing Education of Roma in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Retrieved from [http://www.romaeducationfund.hu/sites/default/files/publications/ca\\_bosnia\\_english\\_2010.pdf](http://www.romaeducationfund.hu/sites/default/files/publications/ca_bosnia_english_2010.pdf).
- 25 Open Society Institute, Education Support Program, Monitoring Education for Roma, A Statistical Baseline for Central, Eastern and South Eastern Europe. Budapest 2006. Most of the data are based on calculations. Internet: [http://www.soros.org/initiatives/esp/articles\\_publications/publications/monitoring\\_20061218](http://www.soros.org/initiatives/esp/articles_publications/publications/monitoring_20061218)  
In Republic of Kosovo. 2009. Strategy for the Integration of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Communities in the Republic of Kosovo 2009-2015. [http://www.kryeministri-ks.net/zck/repository/docs/Strategy\\_for\\_the\\_Integration\\_of\\_Roma,\\_Ashkali\\_and\\_Egyptian\\_communities\\_2009-2015.pdf](http://www.kryeministri-ks.net/zck/repository/docs/Strategy_for_the_Integration_of_Roma,_Ashkali_and_Egyptian_communities_2009-2015.pdf)
- 26 UNDP. 2004. Human Development Report Kosovo 2004, Pristina. In Republic of Kosovo. 2009. Strategy for the Integration of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Communities in the Republic of Kosovo 2009-2015. Retrieved from [http://www.kryeministri-ks.net/zck/repository/docs/Strategy\\_for\\_the\\_Integration\\_of\\_Roma,\\_Ashkali\\_and\\_Egyptian\\_communities\\_2009-2015.pdf](http://www.kryeministri-ks.net/zck/repository/docs/Strategy_for_the_Integration_of_Roma,_Ashkali_and_Egyptian_communities_2009-2015.pdf)
- 27 UNDP. 2005. Faces of Poverty. Bratislava. In Republic of Kosovo. 2009. Strategy for the Integration of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Communities in the Republic of Kosovo 2009-2015. Retrieved from <http://>

[www.kryeministri-ks.net/zck/repository/docs/Strategy\\_for\\_the\\_Integration\\_of\\_Roma,\\_Ashkali\\_and\\_Egyptian\\_communities\\_2009-2015.pdf](http://www.kryeministri-ks.net/zck/repository/docs/Strategy_for_the_Integration_of_Roma,_Ashkali_and_Egyptian_communities_2009-2015.pdf)

- 28 Data about education level was collected only for school age Roma. There is no data about education level of 25 respondents that were not of school age.
- 29 This statistics refers to Roma children who at the time of survey were not enrolled.
- 30 This statistics refers to Roma children who at the time of survey were attending primary education.
- 31 This section is prepared by Almija Kapidzic, Save the Children, Bosnia and Herzegovina.
- 32 This section is prepared by Melita Kabashi, Save the Children, Kosova/o.
- 33 See Regional Action Plan, LYRA Project, 2014-2015. *An educational approach*. Exposing students and teachers to accurate information about other groups allows them to learn about intergroup similarities and differences. When individuals have accurate information, they are less likely to accept stereotypes and to be prejudiced. As students and teachers gain knowledge about other groups and their histories, they will be more likely to respect members of those groups and cooperate with them. Drawing attention to the processes of discrimination, engaging actively in team building, and consulting continuously with students all help develop a new culture of tolerance and understanding.

*A vicarious experience approach*. Instead of teaching facts to students about different groups, a program of intergroup education may include video - films, plays, biographies, and other ways of presenting members of all groups in a respectful way. Exposure to such materials will help students recognize the commonalities of all groups and reduce their tendency to draw sharp boundaries between “them” and “us.” The effectiveness of a vicarious experience approach depends on how the message of tolerance is presented. Poor presentations, in which the presenter does not know the material well, uses biased materials, or has little rapport with the audience, may actually increase prejudices instead of reducing them.

*Intergroup contacts*. One way of improving intergroup relations is having students participate in joint activities. When people do things together they have opportunities to judge people on their own merits rather than on stereotypes. These contacts are most successful if the people involved are of equal social status, are working cooperatively on something, if their activity is supported by people in positions of authority, and if the activity involves a high level of intimacy. If the activities are organized inappropriately, students involved in interethnic programs may become more prejudiced. Also key are parent, teacher, and peer support for the activities. Relationships among groups are also affected by school structure and policies. For example, Baker (1995) explored how institutionalized racism (in which the schools

and other basic institutions operate in ways that intentionally or unintentionally deny opportunities to minority students) sustains negative images of particular groups and maintains their subordinate status. Baker concluded that integrated schools focused more on learning than schools in a state of strain and conflict. Haley (1994) also found, for example, that although strong ethnic boundaries separate students, systematic integration and small class size helped students cross ethnic boundaries and achieve higher graduation rates.

*Promoting positive and intergroup relations.* Slavin (1995) found that in traditionally organized schools, interaction between students of different ethnicities was typically superficial and often competitive. With the exception of sports, students had few positive contacts with members of different groups in or outside of school. In addition, Slavin demonstrated that cooperative learning methods can create thoughtful, equitable interactions needed to promote positive racial attitudes. In cooperative learning, students of different races and ethnicities work together in groups, which receive rewards, recognition, or evaluation based on how much they can improve each member's academic performance. Cooperative learning provides daily opportunities for intense interpersonal contact among students from different backgrounds and is structured to give each student an opportunity to contribute. Slavin found that when correctly used, cooperative learning results in intergroup friendships as well as improved general intergroup attitudes. Cooperative learning methods also had positive effects on achievement, particularly for Latino and Black students.

