

Results of the work of the LARGO Association Under I Have a Dream project - April - July 2023

July 28, 2023

The team of the LARGO Association - Kyustendil is pleased to inform you about the progress of the implementation of the I have a dream project.

The work of the actively developed since March 2023 network of women's Roma clubs in the cities of Kyustendil, the village of Kovachevo /Septemvri Municipality/, Botevgrad, Dupnitsa, Rakitovo and Radomir. The purpose of the clubs is to support Roma women in building personal skills and developing self-confidence; visual advocacy and advocacy through art and culture; direct advocacy, as well as developing attitudes, will and skills for organizing and conducting direct advocacy campaigns. Participants discuss various topics related to problems in Roma neighborhoods /health care, infrastructure, education, development opportunities/, Roma customs, traditions, way of life, Roma cuisine, history of the Roma ethnicity, leisure activities, career development opportunities and improving the living status, the role of women in the Roma community, etc.

In parallel with the holding of the club meetings in the period March - June 2023, a series of personal soft skills trainings were held on various topics / teamwork skills, self-confidence and self-perception, combating stereotypes and prejudices, time management, opportunities for self-development/ , participation in activities and events to support the confidence, motivation and empowerment of Roma women and young girls to participate in solving important civic problems and issues of public importance.

On July 8 and 9, 2023, the participants in the clubs had the opportunity to meet and get to know each other live within the framework of the first national meeting of the representatives of the clubs, which was held in the village of Banya, commune. A reason. For two days, the women from the six settlements / Kyustendil, Kovachevo village, Botevgrad, Dupnitsa, Rakitovo and Radomir/ had the opportunity to exchange experiences, sharing the problems of different communities and looking for ways to solve them. Through role plays, discussions and working in groups, the women were able to create different advocacy strategies and plans for direct advocacy campaigns in individual localities.

As part of the informative information campaign, three video messages were produced in July and August 2023 - reports dedicated to early marriages, education and the role and dreams of Roma women.

"My biggest dream is to study medicine and study to become an anesthesiologist. I really enjoy learning about pain. I want to learn about pain and erase it from people's lives at least a little," says Zaprinka from the village of Kovachevo.

Many young people from the Roma ethnic group in our country are born and brought up in a passive position and resignation to fate, and their dreams often do not go further than to have health and understanding in the family. Education and personal development are very often a mirage, even more so - these women do not dare to dream.

I Have a Dream project is being implemented with financial support from Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway under the EEA Financial Mechanism. The main goal of the project "I have a dream" is to test, implement and disseminate innovative methods for empowering Roma women and girls through direct advocacy.

In recent years, however, more and more young girls from the Roma ethnic group in our country go far beyond the established rules and norms in the community in which they live.

These women are united by the "I have a dream" project, which is implemented by the association LARGO Kyustendil in partnership with the association KUN Norway. Its main goal is to implement and spread new innovative methods for empowering Roma women and girls through personal skills and advocacy, to contribute to an environment that respects the Roma woman as a person, and women can stand up for their rights, interests and dreams. They have created their clubs as spaces to fulfill dreams without restrictions. More:

<https://www.largo-dream.com/index.php/bg/news-bg>

"I became a victim of early marriage. I got married at the age of 16," admits Vasi from Vrachesh. "My parents are not bad, but they still live with traditions. I had suitors coming, but I didn't want to marry someone I didn't love. I'm not sorry, I'm going to school, even though I'm small. I have now finished 10th grade, with a good grade. I go to work and home."

A global trend is to increasingly increase the age at which people start a family and become parents for the first time. The general trend of being born later also affects the Roma in Bulgaria.

Roma girls marry so early because of the strict morals in these communities regarding women - they must marry the first boy they have a relationship with. And then they are expected to give birth to children and take care of them at home. The Penal Code provides for sanctions for adults who marry or cohabit with persons under the age of 16. However, the application of these sanctions is rather an exception.

Despite the positive trend, the problem of early marriages and births remains an important topic, because in this vicious circle patterns are reproduced that hinder the full development of entire generations. More on the topic:

<https://www.largo-dream.com/index.php/bg/news-bg>

"If you believe in yourself, you can do absolutely anything" - Fondanza, Kovachevo village

Roma in Bulgaria, however, still remain excluded from education, and part of the reasons for this are the sending of Roma children to special schools, discrimination, difficult access to education due to poverty.

Poverty and lack of education form a vicious circle. Due to limited awareness and lack of financial opportunities, Roma communities often have significantly worse health status.

Therefore, if young Roma have better access to education, they will be able to be stronger advocates for their community in the future. More on the topic:

<https://www.largo-dream.com/index.php/bg/news-bg>

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