

What we achieved within I Have a Dream project

I Have a Dream project aims to evaluate, implement and disseminate with the support of its Norwegian partners (the Norwegian advocacy organisation KUN - Centre for Equality and Diversity, which has extensive experience in empowering vulnerable social groups, committed to the cause of women's and minorities' rights) new methods of empowering Roma women and girls through direct advocacy that empowers them and allows them to organize and defend their interests before local and central authorities, based on the following elements:

(a) development of personal skills and self-confidence

and

(b) the application of innovative Norwegian models of direct advocacy through the methods of art and culture.

This project aims to:

(a) create an internal (for the Roma community) and external (for public opinion) environment that demonstrates respect for Roma women as individuals and at the same time

b) to provide Roma women with tools to assert themselves as subjects who can fight for their rights, interests and dreams. The project addressed this task through innovative methods of empowerment through direct advocacy.

Achieved quantitative results for the 30 month project implementation:

1. The Bulgarian project team has held **33 team meetings**;
2. Within the **18 two-day soft skills trainings** the 3 trainers have trained **315 participants from 6 locations**;
3. **18 events** have been organized, 6 public discussions have been held in 6 localities with the participation of **about 150 people**;
4. A survey was also conducted on the Bulgarian and Norwegian side by organizing and conducting **6 focus groups and 17 in-depth interviews** to explore the problems, challenges and opportunities facing Roma women with **the participation of 63 representatives of the target group** in the towns of Kyustendil, Radomir and Dupnitsa;
5. As a result, **4 reports were written** (1. Why Dreams Fly South report; 2. Roma in the EU and Norway: challenges and most effective practices for empowerment research paper, by Helene Röd and Kiril Gurvich, KUN Centre for Equality and Diversity, Norway; 3. Empirical research through in-depth interviews with representatives of the target groups, conducted by KUN Center for Equality and Diversity, Norway; 4. Report on the activities of

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Roma clubs "On the invention of biography, on leisure management and on the ability to be heard when you speak"). **5 types of communication and information materials** were printed (information brochure, poster, Colourful melancholy booklet with personal stories , Why dreams fly south report; "Roma in the EU and Norway: challenges and most effective practices for empowerment study report);

6. Over **300 participants took part in 160 gatherings** of Roma Women's Clubs, with six advocacy campaigns in six localities and a travelling exhibition of **22 individual photographs**, as well as two national meetings **with 74 attendees**;

7. As part of a communication and public awareness campaign we got **24,696 visits to the project website, 47 posts were uploaded, and we produced 3 documentary videos** on early marriage, Roma women's dreams for development and Roma education;

8. FB profile of the project got over **60 individual posts that generated over 70,000 people outreach**. Kyustendil, Sofia, Dupnitsa, Blagoevgrad and Pernik. Bulgaria, Germany and UK were the top three countries of visitors. We reported **about 50 separate internet media** coverages of our events through published articles and reports.

Quality results achieved

1 Surveys

Desk research colleagues from Norway carried out a study on good practices for Roma empowerment in the EU through direct advocacy, presenting concrete projects, campaigns and initiatives for empowerment through direct advocacy that will serve to implement this innovative method in our country. In addition, through in-depth interviews, they also produced a report on the situation of Roma in Norway, with topics covered including a description of discrimination in the housing market, education and work, gender inequality including domestic violence, antigypsyism and empowerment. On the Bulgarian side, we prepared Colourful melancholy booklet - a collection of personal Roma women's stories and experiences who have achieved success in different professional and life spheres, as well as a mirror non-representative qualitative study Why do dreams fly south? through qualitative sociological research methods (in-depth interviews and focus groups) on the situation, problems, challenges and opportunities facing Roma women in Bulgaria (in order to analyze different perspectives on Roma women's empowerment).

2. Discussions

The project organized and held 6 one-day discussions in 6 cities of the country (Kyustendil, Botevgrad, Dupnitsa, Rakitovo, Radomir, Blagoevgrad). The aim of the meetings was to present the project, to share good practices, conclusions and recommendations from the research, as well as to discuss the idea of forming Roma women's clubs in the 6 cities. The meetings were attended by over 130 representatives of the target group (active Roma women from the local communities), selected with the help of 6 local NGOs. Our partners from KUN joined in with an encouraging video greetings - talking about their experiences with empowering vulnerable groups, the findings and conclusions of their research.

3 Roma Women's Clubs - impact /outputs - the aim of the clubs is to support Roma women in building personal skills and developing self-confidence; visual advocacy and

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advocacy through art and culture; direct advocacy, as well as developing attitudes, will and skills to organize and conduct direct advocacy campaigns. Participants discuss various topics related to problems in Roma neighborhoods (health, infrastructure, education, development opportunities), Roma customs, traditions, lifestyle, Roma cuisine, history of Roma ethnicity, leisure activities, opportunities for career development and improvement of living status, the role of women in the Roma community, etc. The coordinators of the clubs were Roma women from the local communities who recruited participants to the clubs, organized the meetings and managed the activities, i.e. we achieved direct involvement in the organization of the project and the local clubs at the local level, and where the women organized themselves. The project team supported the activities with methodological guidance.

4 Personal development trainings - impact /outputs - a series of trainings on soft skills on various topics were conducted (teamwork skills, self-confidence and self-perception, fighting stereotypes and prejudices, time management, opportunities for self-development), participation in activities and events to support confidence, motivation and empower Roma women and young girls to participate in the resolution of important civic problems and issues of public importance. Participation in the trainings gave new self-confidence and knowledge to the participants, influenced at local level to break stereotypes about the role and place of Roma women.

5. Advocacy campaigns - impact /outputs – the latter were held in six localities, their main objective was to solve local problems in different areas, and developed the potential of the representatives of our target groups to self-organize, demonstrate self-empowerment, set goals and systematically achieve them. What they have in common is that they represent the pro-active civic behaviour of local residents from Roma neighbourhoods in the settlements, who show care and responsibility towards improving the lives of their local communities. The innovative method of empowerment through direct advocacy, which is the main objective of the project, was applied in this activity, as the implementation of the local campaigns was led by the Roma women's clubs and their participants.

6. Information campaign - impact /outputs

The generic and paid campaign reached a huge range of the target group and the general public. Information on all project events and news have been regularly uploaded on the official project website and also on the project FB profile. This information continues to be disseminated to stakeholders of LARGO Association and submitted to the Active Citizens Fund.

7. Traveling exhibition on direct advocacy through photovoice - impact /outputs – it depicted Roma women in a very different way - both in communities and families and in society as a whole: ambitious, confident, successful, independent, persistent, combinative, civic and economically active. The traveling exhibition reveals the many faces of successful Roma women - part of the Roma community in the country, who

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are the living example for others, and demonstrates the positive role models of successful women and girls in their fields of realization from six localities with Roma community. They are educated, beautiful, ambitious and determined to work in their chosen professions. The biggest challenge is to fight with themselves, to believe that they can, that they know and that they will succeed in their fields. Teacher of Bulgarian, English and mathematics, social worker, advocacy expert, mother, owner of an urgent care office, laboratory technician, health mediator, student, geologist, make-up artist, hairdresser, small-scale entrepreneur - these women are living proof that Roma women are capable of achieving a lot and their achievements can be in different lights in different fields.

8. Project sustainability

Through the project, we introduced and tested the model of direct advocacy, which empowers the target groups and allows them to organize and advocate their interests with local and central authorities. LARGO and LARGO's target groups developed their capacity to organise and run successful direct advocacy campaigns in different areas - health, social policies, education, culture, etc. Good practices for direct advocacy are available to all NGOs and informal civil society groups that would like to use this mechanism to protect their interests. The results will be sustainable, precisely because through the project we have shown that the model is applicable in our country, works effectively and the experience we have gained from its approbation is accessible to all. The direct advocacy practices are already being successfully replicated for other civic causes in different parts of the country - in USAID-funded LARGO project in Dupnitsa, Kyustendil and Radomir cities where there are advocacy campaigns for the rule of law, and in the new LARGO project funded by the Bulgarian Fund for Women in which national thematic trainings are provided. The direct advocacy approach was also integrated in the civic education curriculum at the Spanish High School in Sofia and at BUDITEL SofUtne High School.

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