



A Needs Assessment Study on Roma and Egyptian Communities in Albania



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A Needs Assessment Study on Roma and Egyptian Communities in Albania

TIRANA, 29 FEBRUARY 2012

Center for Economic and Social Studies (CESS)

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Abbreviations

CESS	Center for Economic and Social Studies
ECRI	European Commission against Racism and Intolerance
ERRC	European Roma Rights Council
EVLC	Empowering Vulnerable Local Communities
GoA	Government of Albania
HH	Household
INSTAT	Albanian National Institute of Statistics
MoES	Albanian Ministry of Education and Science
MoFA	Albanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MoH	Albanian Ministry of Health
Mol	Albanian Ministry of Interior
MoLSAEO	Albanian Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities
MoT	Albanian Ministry of Transport
MoTCYS	Albanian Ministry of Tourism, Culture, Youth and Sports
NGO	Nongovernmental organization
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-Operation
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNHCR	United Nations Refugee Agency
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
WB	World Bank

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Executive Summary

This study focuses on two marginalized groups of the Albanian society, the Roma and Egyptians. Settled in the Albanian territory for centuries, the Roma, and to a lesser extent the Egyptians, have managed to preserve their traditions and culture. Historically, the relations between the two communities and ethnic Albanians have been distant, but unlike in many other European countries there has been no racial conflict or persecution in Albania. During the post-socialist transition period, the situation of Roma and Egyptians slid from relative wellbeing to extreme poverty due to a combination of factors, including the collapse and closure of many state-owned enterprises, narrow range of trades they engaged in, low educational attainment levels, and discrimination. At present, they are the poorest groups in the Albania.

The study is based on an analysis of quantitative and qualitative, primary and secondary data collected from various regions of the country. The research methodology included (a) a Roma and Egyptian household socio-economic questionnaire consisting of 138 questions; (b) focus group discussions with local Roma and Egyptian community members; (c) semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders and formal and informal leaders of the Roma and Egyptian communities.

Demographic characteristics

In Albania, population growth rates among Roma and Egyptians are higher than those of the majority population, largely due to socio-economic factors. Girls marry and become mothers at a younger age than their peers from other ethnic groups. Due to the high birth rates, the Roma and Egyptian communities have a younger population structure compared to the general Albanian population. The average age of Roma and Egyptian communities is 25.6 and 28.7 years respectively. However, empirical data show that fertility rates have gone down in the past ten years. The average household size today is 4.6 members for the Roma and 4.2 for Egyptians, which is a drop from previous years. This is mainly due to lower fertility rates and internal and international migration.

Housing and infrastructure

The survey data reveal a worsening of the housing and infrastructure conditions of the Roma and Egyptian communities. Over 38 per cent of Roma and 45 per cent of Egyptian families live in old decrepit dwellings, and a further 21 per cent of Roma and 11 per cent of Egyptian families live in shacks. Many of these families do not have access to potable water, indoor toilets, or wastewater services. Infrastructure (especially near Roma settlements) consists mainly of unpaved or poorly maintained roads. In spite of their inadequate housing conditions, Roma and Egyptians do not benefit much from social housing. The poor housing conditions and inadequate infrastructure further isolates them from the rest of society and has an adverse effect on their children's education.

Health

The health situation among Roma and Egyptians in Albania is worse than among the rest of the majority population which is also reflected in their comparatively lower life expectancy. The causes of their unsatisfactory health status relate to poverty, difficult living conditions, lack of basic infrastructure, limited access to health services, low educational level, and some forms of discrimination.

Generally health centres in towns and villages are not far from Roma and Egyptian settlements. However, only 58 per cent of Roma and 76 per cent of Egyptians say they possess health cards, or use the health services. Among other things, this is due to poverty, as many families are not able to afford health insurance payments. A further 37% of Roma and 20% of Egyptians report they do not know where or how to obtain health cards and are not familiar with the relevant procedures. In addition, unofficial gratuity payments, mentioned by 83% of the Roma and Egyptians, are another hindering factor to using the services.

Roma and Egyptian children are one of the most vulnerable groups as far as their health status is concerned. This is mainly due to factors such as malnutrition, difficult living conditions, absence

of prenatal and preventive healthcare, low level of educational attainment, as well as marriages and childbirth at a very early age. The health status of pregnant women is also cause for great concern. In the absence of family planning, the number of abortions for unwanted pregnancies remains high.

Social welfare and social services

Poverty levels among Roma and Egyptian households remain very high and the gap between them and the majority population has been growing steadily. Poor and very poor Roma and Egyptian households face higher levels of social exclusion and have fewer opportunities to participate in the processes that may affect their individual livelihoods, such as employment and education.

Because of their poverty, many Roma and Egyptian households have to rely on alternative sources of income, such as economic assistance, old age pensions, unemployment benefits, disability benefits, and orphans' benefits. On the one hand, government transfers such as these are hardly adequate to meet the needs of poor Roma and Egyptian families and on the other hand, many Roma and Egyptian families are either excluded from social assistance schemes, or do not receive the said assistance for as long as it is necessary. Consequently, we end up with a social assistance paradigm where assistance to the poor is predetermined but often "the poorest of the poor" are unable to benefit from it.

Employment

The survey data show that the Roma (50.3%) and Egyptians (57.6%) are characterised by high levels of unemployment. In addition, nearly a third had been unemployed for more than 1 year. The number of unemployed individuals registered with employment offices is very low (20.7% for Roma and 29.9% for Egyptians). About 90% of Roma and Egyptians who work do not have work contracts and do not make social security contributions.

The Roma and Egyptians provide some reasons

for their high levels of unemployment. According to them, these reasons are mainly linked with the "lack of employment opportunities for all" in Albania (50% of Roma and 54.8% of Egyptians), 'low level of educational attainment' (19.2% of Roma and 21.4% of Egyptians) and ethnicity (16.4% of Roma and 14% of Egyptians).

Poverty and social exclusion from the formal labour market have led the Roma and Egyptians to the informal market, where they are mainly involved in the collection of scrap metals, trade in second-hand clothes, casual jobs, construction and begging. These sorts of jobs do not provide sufficient earnings to adequately provide for their families. However, even the present meagre earnings are on a downward spiral, causing a lot of emotional stress. If no other alternatives are developed the future economic welfare of these communities is at risk.

Migration

Mass long-term unemployment in the formal economy forces Roma and Egyptians to seek employment in the informal market. When the earnings from working in the formal and informal labour market are insufficient to meet their everyday needs, Roma and Egyptians turn to migrating abroad, mainly to Greece and Italy. International migration is one of the key mechanisms used by Roma and Egyptians to help them cope with poverty and social exclusion. The main types of jobs international migrants do in other countries include the collection of scrap metals, farming, casual work, construction, begging and trade in used clothes, however, none of them ensures enough income for the migrant families to come out of poverty. Nearly 47% of Roma and 80% of Egyptian households whose members have migrated abroad say they receive remittances from their relatives. Most of the money received in remittances is used to pay for the households' basic subsistence needs rather than placed in savings or invested. In the short term, remittances from international migrants help alleviate the poverty of many families receiving them. However, in the long term they help reinforce poverty and social exclusion cycles, as they

do not create new jobs. Many children who migrate abroad do not attend school and many international migrants are not signed up for any pension schemes. Moreover, international migration separates families, which in turn leads to additional adverse economic consequences.

Education

The level of educational attainment of Roma and Egyptians has declined in the years of post-socialist transition. Even though there has been some improvement in the 2000s compared to the 1990s, their low educational attainment levels and the growing gap between them and the majority population are major contributors to their unemployment and poverty. Presently 40.3% of the Roma and 12.7% of Egyptians over 8 years of age are illiterate.

Sixty one per cent of Roma and 57 per cent of Egyptian families say that they face difficulties in the education of their children. Roma and Egyptian parents list some causes which are generally poverty-related. Among the main obstacles to their children's education are unaffordability of books and school items, lack of suitable clothing, poor living conditions and lack of infrastructure, the expectation that children must contribute to the family earnings and/or care for younger siblings, etc. In addition, there are also institutional obstacles and other obstacles related to Roma traditions and culture. Discrimination is also a barrier to the education of Roma and Egyptian children.

Preschool education is an essential and indispensable stage in children's education. The survey data show that 26.8% of Roma and 44.4% of Egyptian children aged between 3 and 6 years go to kindergarten. Children who attend kindergarten are able to adapt better to the school environment when they go to primary school and they have less difficulty in learning. Preschool education is also an important link to properly learning the Albanian language. Inclusion of all children in the preschool education system, which should be made mandatory for all families, must also be a priority of educational policies.

Social capital

Roma and Egyptians use their social capital to cope with poverty and social exclusion. The data show that they are rich in cognitive social capital, but lack in structural social capital, such as associations or networks promoting collective action. The strengthening of the latter would empower Roma and Egyptian communities to express their needs and interests, as well as take part in the decision-making processes on the local and national levels.

I. A Brief Overview

Besides the majority Albanian population there is a number of ethnic groups, including Greeks, Macedonians, Montenegrin, Vlachs, Roma and Egyptians who live in the country. The size of these ethnic groups is as yet unestablished¹. Independent sources say that these groups make up 5 per cent of the total population of Albania (Bërxoli, 2001). Unlike other ethnic groups, Roma and Egyptian communities do not have a particular historical homeland they can identify with, and therefore, no diplomatic representation or bilateral agreements to support them and promote long-term economic and cultural exchanges.

Acknowledging the importance of a full Roma and Egyptian integration in the framework of the obligations set out in the Stability and Association Agreement with the EU, the Albanian government drafted a strategy for the economic and social integration of the Roma community (Government of Albania, 2003). In addition, in 2008 Albania became part of the Decade of Roma Inclusion (2005 – 2015), a 10-year endeavour for their integration into the European mainstream societies.

1.1. The origins of Roma and Egyptians

According to historical, anthropological and linguistic sources, the Roma originate from North India. Studies show that their language, Romani, is an Indian language, bearing similarities with Sanskrit, the language from which other languages spoken in present-day Northern India originate (Liegeois, 2009). The Roma migrated from North India towards Europe in successive waves starting from the 9th century A.D. up to 14th century A.D (Silverman, 1995). Although the causes of their migration remain unknown, their migration routes are well established. The few historical documents and linguistic evidence that exist show that the Roma came to the Balkans by way of Persia and Caucasia, through the Byzantine Empire, and then spread to other countries in Europe (Ringold *et al.*, 2003). According

to Croatian sources, some Roma families must have reached the Balkans around the 14th century (Kolsti, 1991) and settled in the Albanian territory around the 15th century (Koinova, 2000). The Roma in Albania are known by various names. In the north they are often called '*gabel*', in the south '*arixhi*', while in the southeast (Korça, etc.) they are known as '*kurbat*'².

Several hypotheses have been advanced in relation to the origin of the Egyptians. One of them posits that Egyptians are of Coptic origin and they came to the Balkans (and to Albania) from Ancient Egypt around the IV-V centuries B.C. (ECRI, 2002). According to Mann (1933) Egyptians are the descendants of Egyptian slaves who fled to Albania from Greece in the 1820s, after Egypt's involvement in the Greek revolution. Another unconfirmed hypothesis is that they originate from Spain (Hasluck, 1938). Other historians and anthropologists studying Roma issues insist that Roma and Egyptians both migrated from North West India and share the same ethnic heritage. It is likely that the Egyptians were assimilated into the mainstream language and culture because of their earlier migration and as a result of the centuries-long influences of the majority population (Bërxoli, 2005). In addition to the appellations *Egyptian* or *Balkano-Egyptian* in use today, they were also known as *magjypë* in Shkodra, *evgjitë* in Korça and Berat, and *jevg* in Elbasan (Hasluck, 1938).³

Local names such as *gabel*, *arixhi*, *evgjit*, and *jevg* have historically been used to refer respectively to Roma and Egyptians as inferior communities and today there is a common understanding that such names are considered offensive towards the said communities and their use must be avoided (Taho B. 2002).

Under the Ottoman Empire, the Roma, part of the Egyptians and a large part of the Albanian population converted to Islam, either by force or because of economic reasons. Even though they were treated as a "second class" population, the Roma and Egyptians in the Western Balkans coexisted in peace with the other ethnic groups and were able to cross borders freely. The

1. The October 2011 national population census was the first census held in Albania to include questions on ethnic affiliation. The findings of the Census in relation to the number and size of the various ethnic groups had not yet been published at the time of the publication of this study.

2. According to Marsel Courthiade, the word *gabel* means 'foreigner', while the word *kurbat* is related to the Turkish word *kurbet* (migration).

3. Local names such as *gabel*, *arixhi*, *evgjit*, and *jevg* have historically been used to refer respectively to Roma and Egyptians as inferior communities and today the common understanding is that such names are considered offensive and their use must be avoided (Taho B. 2002).

declaration of Albania's independence in 1912 led to a relatively better treatment of Roma and Egyptians (ERRC, 1997), although the social gap between them and the majority population continued to exist (Koinova, 2000). During the Second World War, nearly half million Roma from different European countries were executed or otherwise killed by the Nazis in concentration camps (Ringold *et al.*, 2003). In Albania, the Roma were afforded a relatively better treatment than in the neighbouring countries and there were no concentration camps or ethnic cleansing campaigns there. In addition, some Roma and Egyptians took active part as partisan fighters in the National Liberation War (Plasari and Ballvora, 1975; Pollo and Buda, 1965).

1.2. Roma and Egyptians during the socialist period

During the socialist period (1945-1990), Roma and Egyptian access to housing, education, health care and social services improved visibly. As Albanian nationals, they benefited from full employment, although part of them still worked as unqualified workers (Fonseca, 1995). Roma living in the countryside worked in agriculture and animal husbandry, while those living in towns worked mainly in construction, public services, and handicrafts (Taho, 2002). Besides these occupations, many Roma continued with their traditional small-trade activities, although private economic activities were punishable by law at the time, especially after the adoption of the 1976 Constitution (De Soto *et al.*, 2005). These consisted mainly of horse trading, trading in handicrafts and other products that they would buy in towns and sell in villages and vice-versa, or otherwise acting as trade intermediaries between urban and rural areas (Courthiade and Duka, 1990). These informal business activities provided them with some supplementary income and, to some extent, gave them a relative advantage over other groups. On the other hand, Egyptians, who were better educated than the Roma, were more integrated in the public sector. In addition to qualified workers in various economic sectors, the Egyptian community produced engineers, medical doctors, teachers, agronomists, professional soldiers and civil servants. As a result, their relative status compared to the Albanian population gradually improved.

1.3. Roma and Egyptians in the post-socialist transition period

In the years of post-socialist transition, the situation of Roma and Egyptians slid from relative wellbeing to extreme poverty due to a combination of factors, including the collapse and closure of many state-owned enterprises, narrow range of trades they engaged in, low educational attainment levels, and discrimination. At present they are the poorest and most marginalised ethnic groups in Albania (De Soto *et al.*, 2002). Studies have shown that their poverty levels remain higher than those of the Albanian majority and their situation is deterioration further⁴. Although the Roma and Egyptian communities have historically been the poorest in Albania, the decline of their living standards during post-socialist transition occurred at much faster rates compared to other ethnic groups. This helped create a vicious circle perpetuating illiteracy and lower education levels among the Roma and Egyptians, which in turn contributed to their further marginalization in the society.

On the other hand, the post-socialist transition towards a market economy and democracy opened up new opportunities to Roma and Egyptians. Today they can organise themselves to express their identity and protect their interests. Starting from 1991 a number of Roma NGOs have been established, including as Amaro Dives, Amaro Drom, Rromani Baxt, Alb Rrom, *Romët për Integrim* (Roma for Integration), Rromani Kham, Disutni Albania, Kabaja, Roma Women, Roma of the North, *Zemra e Nënës* (A Mother's Heart), Roma Active Albania, etc. Some Roma and Egyptians have been elected as councillors on local government bodies in Elbasan, Korça, Delvina, etc. (CRS, 2007). Although they take part in various political parties, Roma and Egyptians lack direct representation and have no representatives in the public administration to ensure the protection their interests and needs.

4. According to these studies, about 75 per cent of Roma and Egyptian families are classed as "very poor", while for the general Albanian population this figure stood at 28.8 per cent in the early 2000s. The Roma and Egyptian communities are distinguished by two extremes - 80 per cent of households are classified as poor or very poor, while a minority of about 5 per cent are relatively well-off. Poor and very poor families are faced with high levels of social exclusion due to their not being able to meet their basic everyday needs. Consequently, they have fewer opportunities to participate in the processes that may affect their individual livelihoods, such as employment and education.

1.4. Two distinct groups

Regardless of whether they share a common origin or not, Roma and Egyptians in Albania are two groups quite distinct from each other (ECRI, 2002), with manifestly different identities⁵. Egyptians do not speak the Romani language; traditionally they have been known as skilled ironsmiths, musicians, etc., and their religion is *syncretic* (combining parts of Islam, Orthodoxy and Animism). Unlike the Roma, Egyptians were generally sedentary and usually lived in “separate neighbourhoods” in inner cities or large villages, which were often named after them (A.T, 1943; Milaj, 1943). Compared to the Roma, they were better integrated in the Albanian society. Joseph Swire (1937) wrote that men worked as “porters and blacksmiths” and used to do jobs that were not preferred by the Albanians, while women “worked as maids in the homes of the rich.” In the 1930s, Margaret Hasluck (1937) drew a clear distinction between two groups which, according to Turkish sources, had lived in Albania from before 1604, namely those who “live in tents and speak their own language, the Romani, and the sedentaries, who live in houses or huts, and have forgotten the Romani language.” She estimated that the total number of both groups in Albania was “around 20,000 people”, of which “only 2,000 were still nomads”. Women’s costumes, oral traditions, social organisation and lifestyle are completely different among Roma and Egyptians. The two groups have little social contact and intermarriages are not common. In the words of Hasluck (1938), “the nomadic consider the sedentaries as their inferiors and they never give their daughters in marriage to them. But occasionally they may take a girl from them”. The same can be said about the way the Roma are perceived by the Egyptians. According to Mann (1933) Egyptians believed they were “superior to Roma” and “strongly reject the idea of being related to them in any way”.

5. Carol Silverman, a well-known researcher of Roma and Egyptian issues says: “[h]ow was it that, in spite of their common origins, these two ethnic groups diverged? Throughout history the Roma have been the object of constant discrimination and consequently they distanced themselves into being Roma through a series of various ethnic processes which evolved over time. In the same logic, it is possible that during the reign of the Ottoman Empire, characterised by high tolerance towards ethnic and language identity (what was important was religion), Egyptians were assimilated linguistically and developed a different identity, as a means of climbing further up the social ladder.”

1.5. Relations between Albanians and Roma and Egyptians

In the eyes of Albanians the Roma and Egyptians have both been “poorer-than-us” groups and this has often blurred the differences between the two. Mann (1933) wrote that Roma and Egyptians lived in communities in poor neighbourhoods, separate from the Albanian majority.

Historically, the relations between the two communities and ethnic Albanians have been rather distant, but unlike in other countries in Europe, there have been no conflicts or racial persecutions. Roma and Egyptians have played an important role in the Albanian society. From the Ottoman period onwards, they have been known as consummate craftsmen and have contributed to the development of a musical tradition widely appreciated and enjoyed by ethnic Albanians. In addition, they were important intermediaries between urban and rural markets.

1.6. Diversity within the Roma

The Roma are organised in groups, or clans, which can be distinguished on the basis of the time and route by which they arrived to Albania, their socio-economic occupations, their way of life and traditions, linguistic dialects, etc. These groups include the *Meçkaris* the *Karbuxhis*, the *Cergaris* (the *Rupanes* and *Sodraras*), the *Bamillis* and the *Kurtofis* (Courthiade and Duka, 1990), creating, in the words of Liegeois (1983), “a mosaic of diverse groups.”

Traditionally, the Roma were nomadic, but starting from the 1930s, most of the Roma tribes gradually became semi-nomadic, or fully sedentary (Hasluck, 1938). Their centuries-long nomadism and mobility had an economic function, was partly structural and conjectural and connected to their culture (Liegeois, 2009). The Roma ultimately settled in sedentary settlements between the 1960s and 1970s.

II. Objectives And Methodology

2.1. Objectives and purpose of the study

This study seeks to describe and shed light on the current socio-economic situation of Roma and Egyptian communities in Albania through the use of various indicators and methodologies. The needs assessment addresses the causes, nature, extent, and perceptions of the situation of Roma and Egyptians in the twelve regions of the country. The study focuses on the areas as employment, housing, education, health, international migration, civil registration and social services.

The purpose of the needs assessment is to:

- identify and establish the current social and economic situation of Roma and Egyptian communities in Albania;
- assess the impact of government programmes;
- provide the Albanian government and related agencies with base-line data, information and analyses on the allocation of resources to these communities;
- support the ELVC Programme and guide implementation of other development programmes in support of the Roma; and,
- identify the challenges faced by Roma and Egyptian communities with regard to access to social services.

This will contribute to improving human security and access to socio-economic and civic rights by marginalised Roma and Egyptian communities in Albania.

2.2. Methodology

From the point of view of the methodology, the study was based on several quantitative and qualitative research techniques, including:

- Desk review;⁶
- A socio-economic questionnaire;
- Semi-structured interviews with Roma and Egyptians;
- Focus group discussions;
- Interviews with experts;
- Organisation of a workshop to discuss the findings.

Each of these techniques was used both to gather information, and to complement and check the data gathered through the other techniques.

The study team consisted of researchers and interviewers with previous experience in the field of social studies. Some of the interviewers were Roma or Egyptian themselves which helped build an atmosphere of trust with the responders and their families. Before the actual start of field work, the research team met for a two day workshop where they discussed the questionnaire, purpose of the study, and the research methodology applied. The draft-questionnaire was pilot-tested with some households and some of its questions were revised or changed. During the entire survey process, the research team kept daily notes and met regularly to discuss the findings.

2.2. a) Mapping Roma and Egyptian Settlements

The identification and mapping of Roma and Egyptian settlements was carried out in three consecutive phases. In the first phase, the study team conducted a desk-research of previous CESS work on Roma and

6. The research team reviewed all published literature on Roma and Egyptians. The relevant literature provided here in the bibliography annex, includes all the studies and needs assessments conducted by the World Bank, UNDP, UNICEF, ERRC, the Soros Foundation, the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation and Save the Children, on the situation of Roma and Egyptians in Albania and other official documents. In addition, CESS possesses a rich bibliography on the history, culture, traditions and socio-economic status of Roma (and Egyptians) in various European countries. CESS also had at its disposal quantitative and qualitative data collected in the framework of other research work and studies on Roma and Egyptians.

Egyptian communities in eleven districts of Albania. In the second phase, information was provided by Roma and Egyptian NGOs and informal community leaders, mainly through meetings and interviews. A more complete list of Roma households from 68 different locations was provided by the Amaro Drom Association. The third phase consisted of checks on the ground, including the identification of any recent population movements.

2.2. b) The Questionnaire

The main quantitative data gathering tool used in the Survey was the Roma and Egyptian Socio-Economic Household Questionnaire. This consisted of 138 questions addressing all the areas of the study. The research team conducted 1,200 door-to-door questionnaires with members of Roma households in all the settlements and 1,200 questionnaires with members of Egyptian households in the districts of Shkodra, Lezha, Kruja, Kukës, Durrës, Tirana, Elbasan, Pogradec, Korça, Berat, Vlora, and Gjirokastra. These were selected to ensure a statistical representation of: (a) all the districts and areas of the country where large groups live; (b) urban, semi-urban, and rural populations; (c) the various Roma *clans*; (d) the varying levels of socio-economic development, particularly since the start of the transition period; (e) various types of economic activity and industry; and (f) large-scale social processes, such as international and internal migration.

The number of questionnaires administered to both communities in each area was proportional to the size of the respective populations in the selected districts⁷. The Questionnaire was administered to Roma and Egyptian households who declared their

identity as such and consented to participate⁸. One adult individual was selected from each Roma or Egyptian household to represent them and provide all the required information⁹. In many cases the teams did not find anyone at home except children. Therefore, to optimise response rates, the survey was held in the evening when the Roma and Egyptians would come home from their daily activities.

One questionnaire usually took about 30 minutes to fill out and the answers were recorded by CESS staff. This enabled a clear separation between questions focusing on the individual and those seeking to elicit information on the entire household, and ensured that all their inputs were properly tabulated¹⁰.

Roma associations and informal leaders of Roma communities in Lezha, Mamurras, Durrës, Pogradec, Bilisht, Korça, Delvina, Vlora, Fier, etc., assisted in the survey process.

All the quantitative data were entered, checked and then processed by a statistics expert using the SPSS programme. Some data were compared with data collected by previous CESS research studies (De Soto *et al.*, 2005) in 2002 and 2003, with a view to measuring the progress of some indicators.

2.2. c) Semi-structured interviews with officials and experts

The research team had more than 400 meetings and interviews to discuss the focus areas with

7. The quantitative method consisted of the following stages: (a) before fieldwork began, population and family estimates were determined; (b) to guarantee reliability of these population estimates, two to three independent sources, such as representatives of Roma and Egyptian associations, local government representatives, or informal Roma and Egyptian local leaders were consulted, and the mean of these estimates was used; (c) based on the number of families identified, a percentage of the total was calculated; and (d) the resulting figure indicated the number of questionnaires per site.

8. However, some marginalized Roma families declined to participate claiming that the results of the survey (as had been the case so far) would hardly help improve their difficult social and economic situation. In addition, some relatively well-off Roma households (mainly in Elbasan), who did not consider themselves as part of their community any more, refused to be surveyed. Roma families were generally quite open, welcoming and proud of their identity. In some settlements (mainly in the villages of Kulla and Bishtkamëz near Durrës, and some Roma families originating from Kosovo who had moved to the area prior to the Second World War), there were about seven or eight cases in total where they denied they belonged to the said community. This was also the case with several Egyptian households in Tirana, Korça, Elbasan and Gjirokastra, who claimed they did not belong to the Egyptian community and refused to participate. The research team estimates that these cases account for less than 5 per cent of Roma and Egyptian households surveyed.

9. In several cases, illiteracy and the low level of education of the respondents had an adverse effect on the accuracy of information provided. For instance, the ages of family members were often rounded up or down to the nearest figure ending in 0 or 5. The same is true about the years of education.

10. For instance, many questions on social services are addressed to households, while the questions regarding education are addressed to individuals.

representatives of the local and central governments (several ministries¹¹, municipalities and communes), school teachers and leaders, doctors and nurses in hospitals and health centres, experts at Economic Assistance Offices etc. These helped provide information on the number of Roma children enrolled in kindergartens and other educational institutions and those who used health and social services. However, this information should be interpreted with some caution as its accuracy is affected by various factors. For instance, in many cases (especially in big cities) social assistance experts were not able to say with certainty what the ethnicity of the beneficiaries was. In other cases, some individuals and families in receipt of economic assistance had registered for it in Elbasan, Peqin, Rogozhina, or Fushë Kruja but had subsequently migrated to Shkodra, Kukës or Kavaja. The situation was similar in some educational facilities. The number of pupils enrolled in them did not reflect the real number of pupils attending.

The interviews also provided qualitative information which was useful in understanding and assessing the current situation and determining what policies need to be in place to increase Roma and Egyptian access to public services.

2.2. d) Semi-structured interviews with representatives of Roma and Egyptian community

Over 150 interviews were conducted with Roma and Egyptian men, women and children, including leaders of Roma and Egyptian NGOs and informal community leaders. The interviews sought to shed light on the current socio-economic situation and the needs of these communities in the areas of education, health, employment, housing, economic assistance, migration and infrastructure.

2.2. e) Focus group discussions

The research team conducted and facilitated 12 focus group discussions in Shkodra, Kukës, Fushë

Kruja, Tirana, Fier, Pogradec, Korça, Gjirokastra and Vlora. Six focus groups were organised with selected representatives from Roma and Egyptian communities. Four other focus groups consisted of teachers and school principals. An additional two group discussions sought to elicit the opinions of Roma and Egyptian pupils. Each focus group consisted of 7 to 12 individuals of various ages and different socio-economic backgrounds. These focus groups provided qualitative information on the socio-economic situation and the needs of Roma and Egyptian communities.

11. The research team interviewed Gramoz Bregu (MoES); Ilda Bozdo, Etleva Murati, Blerina Tepelena, Gëzim Tushi and Silvana Banushi (MoLSAEO); Luiza Alushi and Gazmend Bejtja (MoH); Ermira Tomco and Doris Andoni (MoT); Gazmend Mullai (MoTCYS); Edmond Gjoleka (MoI).

III. Some Demographic Characteristics Of Roma And Egyptians In Albania

3.1. Higher birth rate and younger population structure

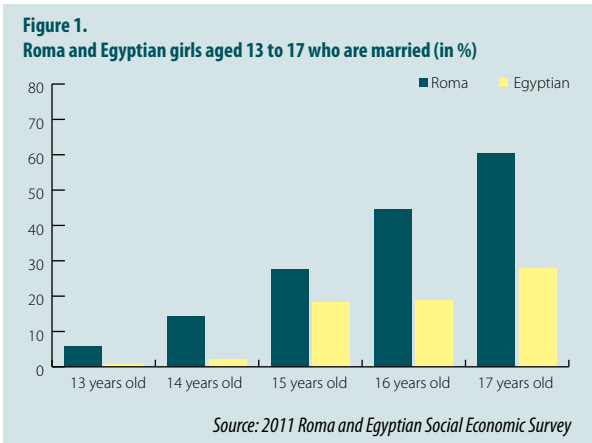
Historically, Roma and Egyptians in Albania have had higher population growth rates compared to other ethnic groups. This is explained by factors such as poverty, low level of education and cultural factors. Roma and Egyptian girls marry and become mothers at a much earlier age than girls from other ethnic groups¹². Studies show that the average age of girls at marriage has gone down in the years of post-socialist transition, mostly because of financial and security reasons.

A World Bank study carried out in 2002-2003 showed that the average age at marriage was 15.5 years old for Roma and 17.2 years for Egyptian girls, which is two years lower than the average age of girls at marriage prior to the transition period. Similarly, the average age at the birth of their first child was 16.9 years of age for Roma and 18.2 years for Egyptian women. In 2011, 31 per cent of Roma and 13.6% of Egyptian girls between 13 and 17 years of age were married (Figure 1). This phenomenon is more widespread among certain Roma communities, especially in Shkodra, Fushë Kruja, Kthesa e Ariut, Rrapishta (Elbasan), Azotik (Fier), Zinxhiraj (Gjirokastra) etc.

Because of their younger age at marriage and higher birth rates Roma and Egyptian communities have a younger population structure than the general Albanian population. The average age of Roma and Egyptian communities is 25.6 years and 28.7 years respectively. The survey data show that in 2011, nearly 34.9 per cent of Roma and 28 per cent of Egyptian population were younger than 14. On the other hand, only 4.1% of Roma and 4.3% of Egyptians were over 65 years old. Among the Albanian majority the figure

stands at 7.5%¹³ (INSTAT, 2002).

A number of Roma and Egyptian children have not been registered in civil registry offices. This makes them “forgotten children” and excludes them from some social services (UNICEF 2007). According to the survey data, in 2011, 5.7% of Roma and 0.7% of Egyptian children aged 0 to 18, were not registered. This phenomenon, which saw a sharp rise in the years of the post-socialist transition due to factors such as marriage at a young age, divorces, poverty and low level of education, internal and international migration, is more common in Tirana, Fushë-Kruja, Fier (Rrom village, Levan, etc.), Shkodra, Berat (Uznovë, Moravë), Elbasan (Rrapishtë), and Korça.



3.2. Family composition

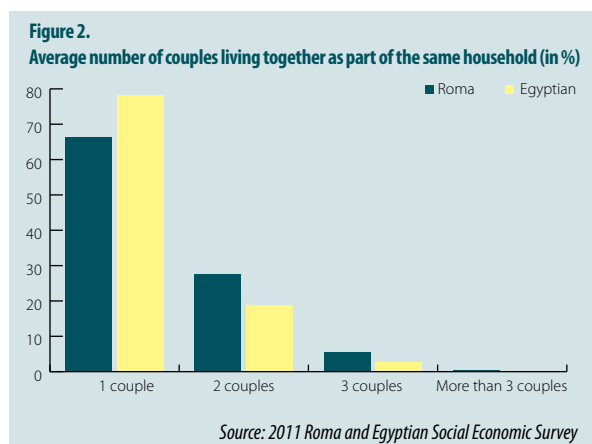
Empirical data show that it is very likely fertility rates among the Roma and Egyptian communities have gone down over the past ten years. In addition to economic factors and migration, another key contributing factor is family planning. Surveys have found that there is an increase in the use of contraceptives. In 2003, only 10% of Roma and 8% of Egyptians said they used contraceptives (De Soto et al., 2005) while in 2011 the number of contraceptive users had doubled (23 per cent of Roma and 20 per cent of Egyptians). However, the survey found that abortion rates remain quite

12. The Albanian law sets the minimum marriage age at 18 for both men and women. Marriages of Roma and Egyptian girls at a younger age are not valid in the eyes of the law.

13. The General Census (2011) results had not yet been published at the time of the publication of this study.



high. Nearly 53 per cent of Roma and 39 per cent of Egyptian women have had at least one abortion and about three quarters of them have had two or more.



rates, major contributing factors to these figures were internal and international migration. Many young Roma and Egyptian couples, who have migrated as nuclear families, have left their parents behind.

However, the average Roma and Egyptian household is still larger than the average household size of the general population, which, according to the 2011 Census, was 3.8 members (INSTAT, 2011). Besides having more children per couple, the size of Roma/Egyptian families is also affected by the relatively higher number of couples living under the same roof. According to survey data, one in five Egyptian households and one in three Roma households are composed of more than one nuclear family (figure 2).

The average size of Roma and Egyptian households today is 4.6 members for the Roma and 4.2 members for Egyptians. It has gone down compared to the early 2000s. A 2003 World Bank study estimated that a Roma household had an average of 6.4 members and an Egyptian household had an average of 5.2 members (De Soto *et al.*, 2005). Besides lower fertility

IV. Housing And Infrastructure

Housing and infrastructure were looked at in terms of home ownership, living conditions, access to potable water and wastewater services, and community infrastructure, particularly roads and electricity.

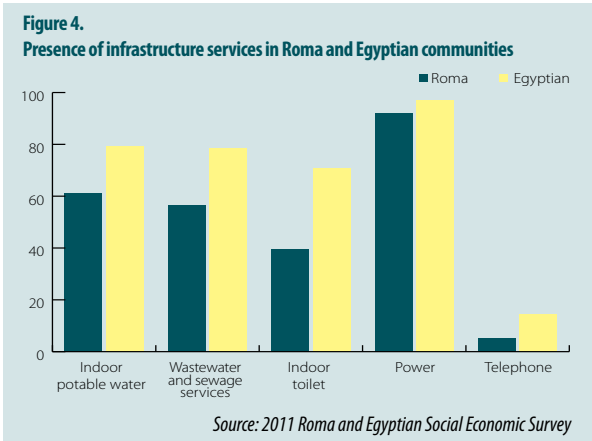
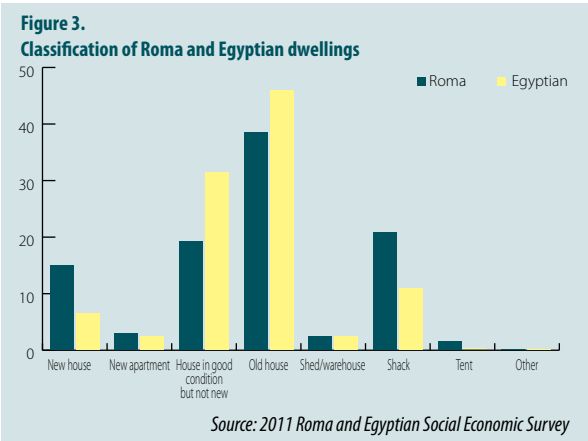
4.1. Housing and infrastructure in Roma communities

The housing conditions of the Roma are not up to standard, both in Albania and other countries of the region, including Bosnia, Serbia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Romania, and Slovakia (ERRC, 2010). There is obvious discrimination, as manifested in cases of forced expulsions, lack of security, and lack of ownership. In addition, these communities face inflated regulations, restrictions, and discriminatory attitudes in social housing, which in turn leads to a physical separation of this community from the majority population. The Roma lack security of tenure and often live in informal dwellings built without planning permission and are not in possession of any title deeds. Moreover, there is some confusion about land ownership. As the Roma have lived in the same settlements for many years they generally take their ownership of the homes they live in for granted, while, in reality, the land is owned by the state. For instance, in 2006, four families were evicted from their homes in a Roma neighbourhood in Elbasan and their houses were demolished to clear the land for the construction of social housing. After the eviction, the families did not receive any assistance, in spite of promises they would have priority in social housing.

The housing situation has a direct bearing on living conditions and any constraints in housing conditions have an inevitable adverse effect on living conditions. The main difficulties in terms of Roma housing conditions appear to be the lack of indoor running water, toilets, and wastewater services, followed by an absence of an adequate communications infrastructure, such no landline telephone services. In addition, infrastructure in general seems to be lacking. A large percentage of Roma community members report they live in neighbourhoods with unpaved roads, or roads in poor condition.

Most Roma families participating in the survey live in old houses (38.4%) or shacks (20.8%) and consist of one (66.3%) or more nuclear families (27.5%). They consider themselves owners of their abodes (80.6%), with only about 10.8% reporting to be renting.

Regarding living conditions, the number of people who say they have indoor toilet facilities and those who have outdoor toilets is almost equal (34% and 37.4% respectively). The situation with access to potable water is similar; although a large number of respondents say they have access to potable water at home (61.2%), there is still a considerably large number who say they don't (38.8%). As regards access to wastewater services, 56.6% of the respondents say they are connected to the sewage network while 43.4% report they are not. The vast majority of the Roma respondents report they have electric energy at home (92%), while 94.8% report that they do not have landline telephones.



As mentioned above, most Roma respondents report they own their homes; 14.3% say they have applied for social housing, while just 1.5% report to have benefitted from social housing. The main reasons for not applying are lack of information (46.2%) and not having the need (35.8%).

Roma respondents have a peri-urban profile – only 12.5% report they own any agricultural land. Those who do, cultivate mainly grain (49.4%), 19.1% report not to grow anything, while 20.2% report that they lease their land out.

In addition to their inadequate housing and living conditions, the majority of Roma report they live in areas with unpaved roads (52.2%), or roads in poor condition (22.5%).

Many recent Roma settlements are campsites where the Roma live in makeshift tents or huts on river banks. Campsite sizes vary by area. In Tirana (Shkoza, Farka, etc.) and Shkodra, the campsites are large and consist of 20 to 50 tents or huts. In Kukës, Peshkopia, Shupenza, Beltoja, Vrion, etc., they consist of 10 to 20 tents or huts, while in Fushë Ali, Qafa e Vishës, Ersekë, etc., between 2 and 5 tents. In some other settlements, including those in Saranda and Milot, the Roma have set up camp in abandoned warehouses and pay rent to their owners. The smaller settlements often consist of members of the same Roma family, while larger settlements bring together Roma families originating from various regions of Albania.

The above statistics show that the Roma community face a number of hardships in terms of their housing and infrastructure services. Even though they are one of the poorest communities in the country and live mainly in shacks with inadequate access to potable water and wastewater services, they do not benefit at all from social housing programmes. Consequently, the Roma remain largely isolated, living in shacks and old dwellings in communities served by poor infrastructure. All these factors further limit their integration opportunities and add to their hardships. Poor living conditions and infrastructure may also have an adverse effect on their children's education. Poor infrastructure may make it harder for children to walk or travel to school, while poor housing conditions make it harder for them to do their homework and concentrate on school work. Consequently, housing

and infrastructure need further attention because they are key factors contributing to intergenerational poverty by creating barriers to the education of the younger generations and hindering their adaptation to the society.

4.2. Housing and infrastructure in Egyptian communities

In spite of their being two quite distinct groups, the Roma and Egyptian communities have historically faced similar difficulties. The Egyptian community is generally more integrated than the Roma. According to the survey data, the Egyptian community live in slightly housing and infrastructure conditions. However, they, too, face a number of similar constraints like the Roma. The members of the Egyptian community say they live mainly in old houses (45.8%) or dwellings in a good state of repair, but not new. They, too, report to be homeowners of (83.5%), and only a small percentage (7.1%) say they are renting their accommodation. Only 10.9% of Egyptian community members report to live in shacks, a much lower percentage than among the Roma.

The housing conditions of the Egyptian community appear to be significantly better than those of the Roma. A high percentage (63.1%) report to have indoor toilets, compared with the 19.5% who say they have outdoor toilets. In addition, 79.2% and 78.6% report to have drinking water and indoor toilets respectively. An overwhelming majority (97%) report to have electricity and, a higher percentage of Egyptians than Roma have landline telephones at home (14.6%). Ownership of agricultural land is almost inexistent, with an overwhelming 98.5% reporting not to own any.

Perhaps related to the fact that the majority of the Egyptian community members report to be homeowners, 82.8% say they have not applied for or benefitted from social housing. The main reasons for not applying were lack of information (45.4%) and not being in need (42.8%).

In terms of the overall infrastructure, 39.6% report that roads in their community are paved, while 35.8% say they live in areas where the roads are not paved. The

percentage of Egyptian community members who say they live in areas with poor road infrastructure (6.9%) is much lower than the figure reported by the Roma.

4.3. Conclusion and recommendations

The housing and living conditions of Roma and, to a lesser extent, of Egyptians are assessed as unsatisfactory. The houses they live in are generally old (when not simply shacks) and overcrowded, lacking in basic comforts (there is often no drinking water indoors). The buildings often do not meet basic sanitation requirements in terms of toilets and wastewater services and are situated in peri-urban areas with inadequate communal services, the most obvious being the lack of paved roads.

Law No. 9232/2004 provides for social housing programs and sets out the criteria for accessing social housing. Allocation criteria are determined on the basis of social and economic indicators rather than ethnic or minority affiliation. However, the main problem in this respect is that the “verifiable source of earnings” criterion is one that the majority of the Roma and, to a lesser extent, Egyptians, are not able to meet. Working in informal sectors, or informally in formal sectors, means that the Roma in particular are unable to meet the key criteria for receiving social housing. In these cases alternative solutions must be considered in order to close the gaps in areas such as transfer of residence and provision of free legal aid.

A number of projects have been launched to address Roma housing needs (Andoni, 2011). One such project involved funding the construction of 44 new housing units in Korça; another focused on providing water supply and improving sanitation for 50 households in Tirana. A third project provided funds for infrastructure improvements in an 18-household neighbourhood in the municipality of Kuçovë. A National Housing Agency project involved the construction of an eight-storey building in Korça to accommodate 30 Roma families, who will repay the cost of acquisition over 25 years. Another project focused on the use of 1,138 apartments under construction as social rental housing. Moreover, Decree No. 343 of 29.04.2011

transferred ownership of 8,150 square meters of land near Shkozë to the National Housing Agency, which will be used for the construction of approximately 70 rental housing units, social services, kindergartens, etc.

The following are some policy recommendations regarding housing and infrastructure:

- The criteria for social housing, change of abode, and provision of state legal aid need to be adjusted to take into account the situation of most Roma and Egyptian families who work in informal sectors of the economy and are not able to provide proof of income, those live in shacks and do not possess a tenancy contract or title deed to their home, or need administrative and legal assistance to access their basic rights.
- The absence of tenancy agreements or title deeds makes it impossible to conduct checks on self-declared addresses/ places of abode. Alternative admissible documents could be certificates issued by a non-governmental organization, possibly providing a postal address (PO Box) where the individual is assumed to receive his/her official mail. Local government authorities (the nearest civil registry offices) only issue official documents and certificates (family residence certificates, family certificates, etc.) to people who pay local taxes. The Ministry of Interior informs that it has often denounced this practice which is still quite common, although it has no basis in the law. As a result many poor families, most of them Roma, (who are not exempt from local taxes because they have failed to register for receiving social assistance) cannot obtain the required documentation. To address this, the Ministry of Interior must issue an order to civil registry offices to provide Roma individuals with the necessary documentation, even if they might seem not to be in receipt of social assistance or unemployment benefits.



- Consider the possibility (after an assessment on a case by case basis) that Roma families who have been living in slums on public land for a long time, are initially given this land “in use” and subsequently as “a serviced plot”, under the provisions of the relevant legislation. Roma families can then build their homes there, pursuant to the low-cost housing guidelines drawn up by local government authorities. Where it is not possible for the Roma families to own the land on which they have settled and built their shacks under the “serviced plot” formula, local government authorities should build low-cost housing run by them and made available to families in need (both Roma and non-Roma), against specific contractual terms.
- Prepare, adapt, distribute and promote relevant information on the applicable laws setting out the procedures for accessing social housing. The number of Roma and Egyptian community members who apply for social housing is extremely low – less than one in seven. While they are free to assess their needs and act accordingly, almost half of the respondents mentioned lack of information about their rights as a barrier to these services;
- Assist Roma and Egyptians with their applications for the legalization of their homes. Because of lack of access to information and specialized help, they risk losing the opportunity to gain ownership of their homes and may end up in the street, pushed out by the more world-savvy and better informed real estate developers.
- Consider providing selected locations with decent public utility services, including access to clean water and toilet facilities for a large number of Roma presently living in shacks, always keeping in mind their high mobility and the lack of infrastructure in the areas where they live;
- Lastly, data collected here do not seem to corroborate the dominant image of Roma and Egyptians as “nomadic” or “mobile”.

The large percentage of Roma and Egyptians who claim to own their homes, combined with the extremely low number of individuals who have moved in the last 12 months (1.1% of Egyptians and 6.5%

of Roma) depict a more sedentary picture than the stereotypical image of the Roma in his caravan. This has its own implications for public authorities and their respective policies and actions.

V. The Health Situation Of Roma And Egyptians

Like many other Central and Eastern European countries, Albania lacks statistics and analyses of the health situation of Roma and Egyptians¹⁴. In many countries it is estimated that life expectancy among the Roma is ten years lower than that of the majority population (Ringold *et al.*, 2003; Braham, 1993). In addition, due to their poverty, difficult living conditions, way of life, low level of education and access to health services, and discrimination, Roma and Egyptians are more vulnerable to contagious diseases and have a higher incidence of medical conditions. This chapter relies mostly on a self-assessment of the current health situation and care available to Roma and Egyptians as well as on the quantitative data gathered by the UNDP survey.

5.1. Roma and Egyptians' self-assessment of their health situation

Data collected by the household questionnaire show that 17% of the Roma and 18% of Egyptians do not consider themselves to be in good health. Nearly 11% of Roma and 12.5% of Egyptians suffer from serious conditions and a further 15% suffer from chronic diseases. According to the respondents, the most wide-spread chronic diseases are cardio-vascular conditions, followed by rheumatism, diabetes, and neurological and psychiatric conditions, kidney disease, and gastric and respiratory conditions (Table 1). Excessive alcohol and tobacco consumption is a factor that contributes to a higher incidence of many chronic conditions but their health consequences are difficult to be quantified. Incidences of tuberculosis, syphilis, hepatitis B and HIV/AIDS are greater among Roma and Egyptians

than the majority population (Hafizi *et al.*, 2007). Roma and Egyptian children (aged between 0 and 18) are mostly affected by respiratory, infective and mental conditions.

Table 1. Incidence of health conditions among Roma and Egyptians

No.	Diseases	Roma	Egyptians
1	Blood pressure	16.9	18.6
2	Heart	15.7	16.5
3	Rheumatism	8.7	2
4	Diabetes	6.8	5.5
5	Mental conditions	6.1	6.6
6	Kidney disease	4.9	4.5
7	Stomach conditions	3.2	2.7
8	Asthma	3.9	5
9	Cold/Flu	2.3	3.2

Source: 2011 Roma and Egyptian Social Economic Survey

In addition, data from the survey reveal that 4.1% of Roma and 5% of Egyptian households have family members who suffer from some kind of disability. Of these, nearly a quarter are children, or nearly 3.2% of the total number of Roma and 3.4% of Egyptian children.

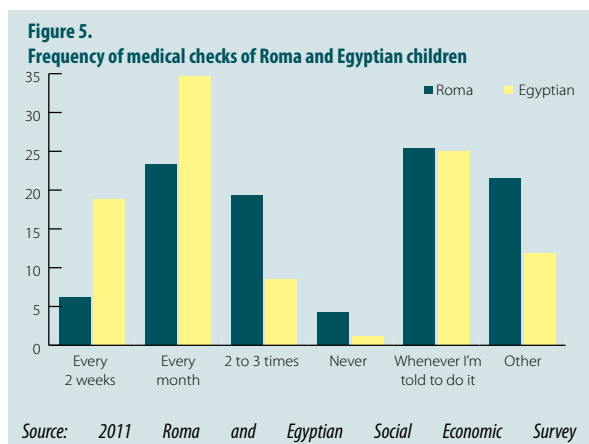
5.2. The health status of women and children

Roma and Egyptian children are among the most vulnerable sub-groups as far as their health is concerned. In Albania there is a lack of data on the health status of Roma and Egyptian women and mortality rates among Roma and Egyptian infants and children. Nevertheless, some partial data gleaned from interviews with medical staff at several healthcare centres suggest that infant and child mortality rates among the Roma and Egyptians are higher than among the rest of the population (Itano, 2007).

The data indicate that 19.2 per cent of Roma and 10.9 per cent of Egyptian respondents have lost a child after birth. Besides socio-economic factors, one of the reasons for this situation is insufficient health care. Some partial data could provide an explanation for this. Even though an overwhelming majority of Roma and Egyptian women give birth in maternity hospitals or specialized clinics (98.9 per cent and 97.7

14. Other Roma studies in Central and Eastern Europe mention similar problems in monitoring the health status of the Roma. See, for example, Foldes, M. E., & Covaci A., *Research on Roma health and access to healthcare: state of the art and future challenges*, *International Journal of Public Health*, 2011; or Hajioff S., & McKee M., *The health of the Roma people: a review of published literature*, *Journal of Epidemiological and Community Health* 2000; 54:864–869.

per cent respectively), the number of health checks for children in their first year of their life remains low. According to the survey data, 70% of the Roma and 46% of Egyptians (Figure 6) do not take their children to family clinics for regular checks.¹⁵



Immunisation of children is a measure protecting children from many serious contagious diseases. About 10% of Roma and 4% of Egyptian respondents admit they do not regularly vaccinate their children. According to the physicians who participated in the study, Roma and Egyptian parents fail to vaccinate their children regularly, mostly due to negligence and a lack of awareness, a result of their low level of education and internal and international migration. The interviews held with Roma and Egyptian families revealed a high incidence of viral meningitis, epilepsy, mental retardation and various congenital disabilities. A 2003 study commissioned by the World Bank revealed mental and physical developmental issues are widespread among Roma and Egyptian children. This is mainly a consequence of malnutrition, difficult living conditions and the lack of pre-natal and preventive health care (De Soto *et al.*, 2005). The health status of pregnant women and new mothers is another cause for great concern. The number of pre-natal and post-natal health checks is

lower than the recommended guidelines¹⁶. The survey data show that about 12% of Roma women between 15 and 30 years of age do not have any health checks during pregnancy, while 35% of them have up to three checks. The situation is similar in the post-natal period. The survey data show that 51% of Roma and 25.8% of Egyptian mothers do not have any health checks after birth. As a consequence, many Roma and Egyptian women suffer from various infections. A 2007 Swiss Cooperation project in the village of Morava near Berat showed that 82% of young Roma women who were seen by a team of gynaecologists, suffered from several genital tract infections (CESS, 2007).

Besides the socio-economic factors described below, major factors contributing to this situation are the very young age at marriage and birth of first child, especially among the Roma¹⁷. In general a typical Roma couple have their first child one or two years after getting married. The survey data show that about 40% of Roma and about 19% of Egyptian mothers aged between 13 and 40 gave birth to their first child at 13 to 16 years of age, i.e. while they were still children themselves. Marta, a 17 year old Roma, says: "I was 13 when I got married and I have been married for 4 years now. I was 15 when my first baby girl was born." Because of their young age at marriage and childbirth, most women do not have adequate knowledge about reproductive health¹⁸, pregnancy, childbirth and childcare. Roma and Egyptian girls obtain such information only through informal channels. The survey data show that 85 per cent of Roma and 80 per cent of Egyptian girls receive such information from older female relatives and about 10 per cent of Roma and 11 per cent of Egyptian girls receive it from their girlfriends. Moreover, marriage and childbirth at a younger age adversely affects the

15. In Albania, each child must have about 19 mandatory health checks in the first year of his/her life. The distribution is as follows: three checks in the first month, fortnightly checks for the following five months, and then monthly checks up to their first birthday.

16. In Albania, pregnant women are required to have a total of nine mandatory health checks, including four ultrasound scans. New mothers must have three health checks in the immediate post-natal period.

17. According to UNICEF, early pregnancies and births put the lives of mothers and unborn babies at risk, and increase the danger of premature births, complications during labour, babies' low weight at birth, and infant mortality.

18. Sexual and reproductive health education is part of the curriculum in the higher grades of the 9-year school. However, many Roma girls abandon school as soon as they complete the lower primary cycle.

quality of childcare they can provide, compared to more mature women.

The low educational level of Roma and Egyptian women/mothers is another factor that adversely affects their own health and the care of their children. Many do not use the health services because they are not aware that their child's condition requires medical treatment.

In these conditions, health policies and the health administration must consider the following measures:

- Regular visits of mobile medical units to various Roma and Egyptian settlements, especially to high-poverty campsites and slums lacking the most basic infrastructure, to offer healthcare services to Roma and Egyptian children, pregnant mothers, and new mothers in need of medical treatment.
- Pregnant women and new mothers, and young children living in campsites and slums must be offered medical checks, medication, and other health treatments, free of charge.
- Educational establishments, health centres and mobile medical units must be involved in educating and raising the health awareness of parents, women, and new mothers.

5.3. Main factors contributing to poor health status

The factors accounting for the poor health situation are poverty, difficult living conditions, poor access to health services, overt or covert discrimination, and Roma culture and traditions (marriages and childbirth at a young age).

a) Malnutrition. Poor diet is one of the main contributors to poor health. Almost 27.3 per cent of Roma and 31.7 per cent of Egyptian families state they "do not have enough money, not even to buy food". Poor Roma and Egyptian families, which constitute the majority, consume food irregularly and their diet is low in nutritional value and

unbalanced, very rich in fats and carbohydrates. Malnutrition affects the ability of Roma and Egyptian children to cope with diseases. A female doctor from the Shkoza health centre in Tirana states: "Diseases are more widespread among children of the Roma community - a direct consequence of their low resistance to disease due to malnutrition and difficult living conditions".

b) Difficult living conditions. Nearly 25% of Roma and 13.4% of Egyptian households surveyed live in makeshift shacks, tents and huts, while many others (38.4% of Roma and 45.8% of Egyptian families) live in old buildings lacking basic infrastructure. Many families (38.8% of Roma and 20.8% of Egyptians) do not have potable water in their homes and many others (60 per cent of Roma and 29 per cent of Egyptians) do not have indoor toilets. In the recent years, many Roma and Egyptian settlements, such as in Shkodra, Beltoja, Fushë-Kruja, Berat, etc., have been regularly affected by flooding. In many other settlements (especially in campsites in Shkodra, Beltoja, Kukës, Peshkopia, Fushë Alie, Shupenza, Milot, Ura e Drojës, Shkoza, Farka, Golem, Qafa e Vishës, Vriion, Gjirokastra, etc.) there is no potable water and no access to wastewater services. Lack of running water and toilets facilities in some Roma and Egyptian settlements directly affects their inhabitants' personal hygiene and a major contributor to the spread of various infectious diseases.

BOX 2

The Roma community in Shkoza lives in huts on the banks of the Lana River. They earn their living mainly by collecting scrap metal and cans from garbage bins around town. The settlement lacks the most basic infrastructure. They get their potable water illegally, from a main pipeline supplying water to Tirana, while their wastewater is discharged straight into the river. The families have built some makeshift toilets using scrap materials (cardboard, plastic sheets, etc.) on the banks of the Lana River. Shpresa, an employee at the health centre says: "Now and then we pay visits to the community. They often suffer from skin diseases..."

5.4. Access to health care services

Generally healthcare centres in cities and villages are not far from Roma and Egyptian settlements (Table 2), while hospitals and maternity clinics are usually only a few kilometres away. The survey shows that only 5 per cent of Roma and 0.5 per cent of Egyptians say that the distance from their settlements to the health centres is an obstacle to their use of healthcare services.

Table 2. Distance to the nearest healthcare centre

Distance	Roma	Egyptians
0 to 0.5 km	62.6	63.1
0.6 to 1 km	20.1	14.9
1 to 1.5 km	1.7	8.2
1.5 to 2 km	1.1	11.7
2 to 2.5 km	9.8	0
2.5 km to 3 km	2.0	1.1
3 to 5 km	2.8	1
Total	100.0	100.0

Source: 2011 Roma and Egyptian Social Economic Survey

Pursuant to the Albanian law, that children up to 16 years of age, disabled people (mental and physical), pensioners, unemployed people in receipt of unemployment benefits and/or economic assistance, mothers on maternity leave etc., are exempt from health insurance payments¹⁹. However, 42% of the Roma and 24% of Egyptians state that they do not have health cards and, consequently, do not benefit from free health services.

A comparison of the groups entitled to receive health cards pursuant to the law, with the employment data collected by this survey reveals the reasons why such a high percentage of the Roma and Egyptians do not possess health cards:

1) According to the survey data, 57.7% of the Roma and 50.3% of Egyptians state they were not working in the previous week, i.e. they are unemployed. The Albanian legislation provides that registered

unemployed job-seekers²⁰ are entitled to health cards. However, the survey data show that only 20.7% of the Roma and 29.9% of the Egyptians have registered as such with employment offices. According to the interviews, many were unaware they could be entitled to a health card if they registered as unemployed;

2) The majority of Roma and Egyptians work in the informal economy and, consequently, do not pay any social security contributions. The survey found that only 4.1% of the Roma and 11.3% of the Egyptians in employment have work contracts and only 6.9% of Roma and 11.7% of Egyptians pay social security contributions.

3) The very meagre earnings they make from employment in the informal sector makes it impossible for many Roma and Egyptians to afford health insurance payments. Mynevere, a Roma woman from Saranda explains, “I have chest pain, but I cannot have an X-ray because the doctor would ask to see my health card. When I went to apply for one, they told me I had to pay health insurance contributions first. How can I pay for them when we can hardly afford to buy food?!” In the countryside, health insurance payments are linked to the land value tax, which for many Roma families is unaffordable. A Roma woman says, “You have to pay land value tax, about 150 to 250 thousand ALL a year²¹, which they cannot pay. That is why so few of them have health cards.”

4) However, there are many Roma (37%) and Egyptians (20%) who do not know how and where to get the health cards and are not familiar with the procedures. A mother from Levani is totally confused: “They asked me for school certificates for the older kids, but they do not go to school...” A woman from Saranda complained, “We do not have health cards, and we cannot even go to Elbasan, where we are registered.”

19. Law no 7870 of 13.10.1994 “On Social Security in the Republic of Albania”.

20. This category must report to the employment office every three months to renew their status otherwise they may lose their jobseeker status and their entitlement to a health card.

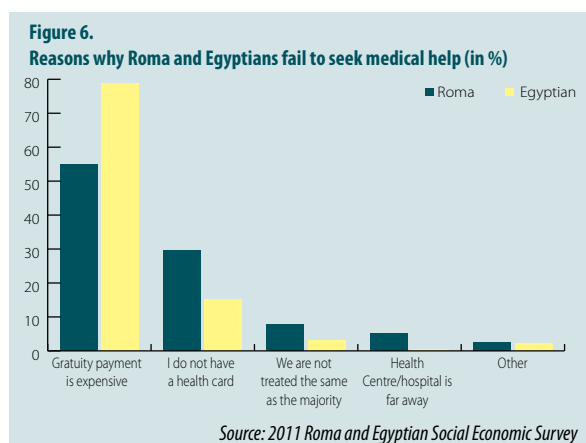
21. In all the interviews the respondents use the old Albanian Lek system. To convert these amounts to today’s value, the number must be simply divided by 10.

Poverty and lack of earnings prevent many from buying medicines or seeking medical treatment. Marjeta, a mother from Elbasan, says, “We beg and we eat. Some deal in scrap metal and can collection. We are extremely poor. I am ill and need medication that costs 100 thousand Leks a month. But I can’t afford to buy them, so I don’t get them.”

Nearly 83% of Roma and Egyptian respondents mention that they pay gratuity for the services they receive in public health centres and hospitals. Informal payments and other corrupt practices lead to an increase in costs, inadequate health treatments, and declining health. The survey data show that 54.8% of the Roma and 78.9% of the Egyptians who do not seek medical help at health centres or hospitals, say that “the informal payment is very expensive” (Figure 6).

As a result of such practices, about 40% of the Roma and 35% of Egyptians believe that even if they had health cards, they would still have to pay. Consequently, those who believe themselves to be in good health, ask the question, “Why should we have health cards, when we would have to pay anyway?!”

In the absence of health cards, many Roma and Egyptians seek medical treatment for themselves and their children only when the disease or condition is already at an advanced stage. Edlira, a worker at the healthcare centre in Rapishtë near Elbasan, says: “Those without health cards go to hospital, to the paediatric department. They are the poorest; they only go to hospital only when the child is on the brink of death.” According to interviews, this is more common in Shkodra, Beltoja, Kukës, Peshkopia, Shupenza, Milot, Shkoza, Vrion, Saranda, etc. They usually go to A&E to receive treatment or medication. Meleqe, a Roma mother from Saranda, speaks about her children: “My girl was sick with an ear infection and I kept her at home all day. In the evening we brought her to the A&E. They do not ask for money, but we give them something of our own free will.”



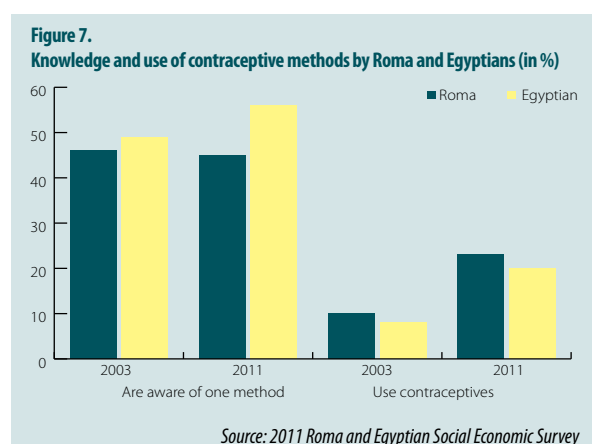
Discrimination is another obstacle. Nearly 25% of the Roma and 15.3% of Egyptians say the doctors do not treat them equally to the majority population. Pranvera, a Roma woman from Fushë-Kruja says, “No one pays any attention to us in hospitals” This is one reason why Roma (7.8%) and Egyptians (3.1%) are discouraged from seeking medical help.

5.5. Family planning

Family planning is essential, both for poverty reduction and economic growth, and for the reduction of mortality and morbidity rates. Surveys show that the use of contraceptives by Roma and Egyptians has increased in the recent years (Figure 7). In 2003, only 10% of the Roma and 8% of Egyptians used contraceptives (De Soto *et al.*, 2005) while in 2011 the number more than doubled (23% for Roma and 20% for Egyptians). From the interviews and group discussions it transpired that use of contraceptives as a birth-control method is seen as a responsibility of Roma women, not men’s. Ermira, a family planning worker at the village of Gosa near Kavaja, says, “There are many women who receive their contraceptive treatment in the form of Depo-Provera injections. Its effect lasts for three months and then the injection has to be repeated. Many women do this without telling their husbands, who often come home drunk.” Besides the fact that many men refuse to use them, the low level of use of contraceptives is also due to a lack of awareness about the existence of such methods. The survey shows that only 44.3 per cent of Roma and 57.5 per cent of Egyptians are aware

of a birth-control method. Furthermore, qualitative techniques show that Roma and Egyptians are not familiar with modern contraceptive methods because of lack of access to such information.

Failure to use contraceptives often leads to unwanted pregnancies. The survey shows that abortion rates for unwanted pregnancies continue to be high, and abortion is seen as a method of birth control. Nearly 53% of Roma and 39% of Egyptian women have had one abortion, while 75% of them have had two or more. The average number of abortions per woman (for those who have had abortions) is 4.8 for Roma and 5.2 for Egyptian women. Despite the fact that most have their abortions in hospitals, assisted by a doctor or a nurse, there are women (3.2 per cent Roma and 6.9 per cent Egyptian) who report having had their abortions at home, with no specialised help.



5.5. Conclusions and recommendations

In Albania, Roma and Egyptians are in a worse health situation than the majority population, which is mirrored by their lower life expectancy. The causes of their poor health status are related to poverty, difficult living conditions, absence of basic infrastructure, limited access to healthcare services, low educational level and some forms of discrimination.

Roma and Egyptian children are among the most vulnerable groups in terms of their health, as reflected by the higher rates of their infant and child mortality. This is mainly due to malnutrition, difficult living conditions, lack of prenatal and preventive health care, low level of education, and marriage and childbirth at a very young age. The health of pregnant women and young mothers is also a cause of great

concern.

Roma and Egyptians do not use family planning to the same extent as the majority Albanian population. In the absence of family planning, the number of abortions for unwanted pregnancies is quite high. Even though the use of contraceptives has increased compared to 10 years ago, many Roma and Egyptians are not familiar with modern contraception methods, mainly due to lack of information.

Recommendations

Many Roma and Egyptians, especially those living in very poor and remote communities and with very low level of educational attainment, do not use the health services because often they are not aware that their condition requires medical attention. To address this, health policies must aim to educate and raise the awareness of these groups about the basics of various health conditions. This awareness raising can be carried out in schools, health centres, or by medical staff visiting these communities periodically. Similar experiences in other countries (Marcinčin and Marcinčinová, 2009) have shown that healthcare education can be carried out using simple and understandable language, adapted to the culture and educational level of these communities. This would require that health teams are preliminarily trained on the specific aspects (living conditions and way of life, culture, mobility, etc.) of Roma and Egyptian communities.

It would be useful to appoint health coordinators to some poor Roma communities with low educational level, such as the ones in Shkožë, Bregu i Lumit, Babrru, Sharrë, Kthesa e Ariut, Fushë Kruja, Driza, Levan, Rapishta, Zinxhiraj, etc. They can help the Roma with the application procedures for health cards and other necessary documents, encourage them to see the doctor, facilitate children immunisation campaigns, undertake health education and family planning activities, etc. The experience of other countries such as Romania, Bulgaria, Serbia, Macedonia, Slovakia, Ukraine etc., can be of great value in this respect (Open Society Foundation, 2011).

Many Roma and Egyptians – including children up to 16 years of age, pregnant women, pensioners, the unemployed, and people in receipt of economic

assistance etc., do not have access to healthcare services, in spite of being insured. This is either because they are not informed, or because they do not know where to get the necessary documentation (health cards etc.). More needs to be done to help these people by raising their awareness and assisting them with the application procedures.

Due to their unemployment and extreme poverty, many Roma families migrate internally (both short term and long term). In many cases, for instance in Shkodra, Beltoja, Shupenza, Peshkopia, Kukës, Milot, Ura e Drojës, Ura e Farkës, Shkozet, Vrion, Erseka, etc., they set up informal settlements consisting of makeshift tents and shacks, in conditions of extreme poverty and lacking in the most basic infrastructure. Nearly none of these families have access to the health services provided by their nearest health centres because they are not duly registered. To address this problem, these families must be issued with electronic health cards, so that they are able to access health services anywhere in the country.

Health centres near Roma and Egyptian communities must encourage family planning by organising training courses, providing information and dispensing contraceptives free of charge.

VI. Welfare And Social Services

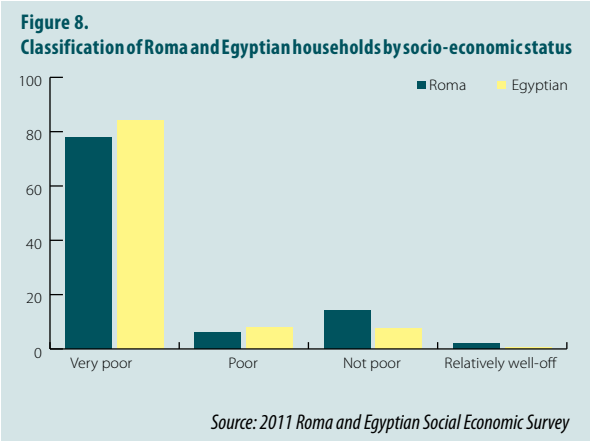
Roma and Egyptians, as well as the majority population, have a multi-dimensional understanding of poverty (De Soto *et al.*, 2002). They understand poverty in terms of their inability to meet their material needs and to uphold their family traditions, but also as a sense of exclusion from social and economic life and an absence of hope and security. The key elements are their material needs (food, clothing, housing, etc.). Based on Roma and Egyptian self-evaluation of the degree to which their needs for food, clothing and housing are met, we grouped them into four different socio-economic categories: very poor, poor, not poor, and relatively well-off.

Table 3. Classification of Roma and Egyptian households by socio-economic status

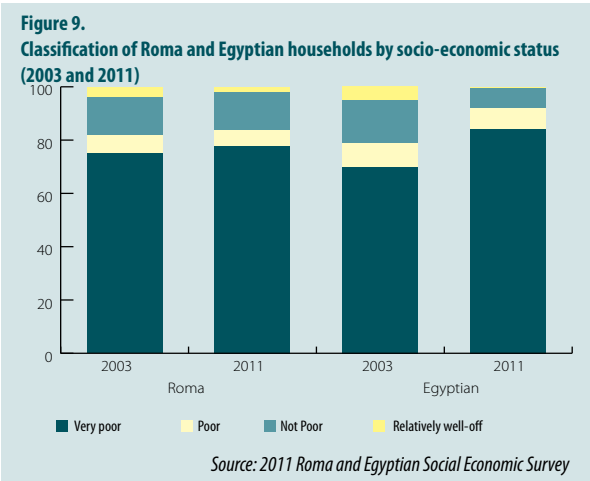
Assessment of socio-economic status	Roma	Egyptians	Socio-Economic Group
We cannot afford to feed ourselves	27.3	31.7	Very poor
We have just enough money to survive	50.4	52.4	Very poor
We have enough money for food, but not to buy clothes	6.1	7.8	Poor
We have enough money to meet our main needs	14	7.5	Not poor
We have enough money and we also manage to save some	2.1	0.6	Relatively well-off
Total	100	100	

Source: 2011 Roma and Egyptian Social Economic Survey

The households who reported “we do not have enough money to buy food” or “we have just enough money to survive”, were classed as “very poor”. Those who said they had “enough money for food, but not to buy clothes”, were classed as “poor”. A third group, who “had enough money to meet their main needs” were classed as “not poor” and those who had “enough money and could also save some,” were classed as “relatively well off” (Table 3).



According to this classification, 77.7% of Roma and 84.1% of Egyptian families are “very poor” and 6.1% of the Roma and 7.8% of the Egyptians are “poor”. These two groups, making up over 80% of the Roma and Egyptian families, experience poverty in the form of material deprivation (Figure 8). In addition, they also experience high levels of social exclusion, because they are less likely to be able to meet their everyday needs and participate in the processes that have a direct bearing on their lives as individuals, such as employment and education.



A comparison with a similar survey conducted in 2003²² (De Soto *et al.*, 2005) reveals a reduction in the

22. Both surveys asked identical questions and provided the same multiple choice answers. The respondents were asked: Which of the following statements best describes your family’s economic and social status? The choices from which the respondents could choose were: 1. We do not have enough money to buy food. 2. We have just enough money to survive. 3. We have enough money for food, but not to buy clothes. 4. We have enough money to meet our main needs. 5. We have enough money, and we also manage to save some.

extreme poverty figures (“we do not have enough money to buy food”) among Roma and Egyptian households. But the poverty of Roma and Egyptian families is still at slightly higher (Figure 9) and the gap with the majority population has seen an increase in the period between the two surveys (2003 – 2011).

Social Protection and Social Services

Social protection includes economic assistance, disability payments (DP), unemployment benefits, old age pensions, and benefits for orphans. Although the payments made out of these funds are small, they still represent an important source of income for Roma and Egyptian families. The survey shows that they represent about 13.1% of the budget of a typical Roma and 24% of the budget of an Egyptian family²³. The low level of access to social protection and provision to eligible categories is related to institutional weaknesses, low budgetary allocations for social protection, and low level of education of Roma and Egyptian households. In addition to receiving money from the Government, some Roma and Egyptian households also receive food aid from some NGOs and religious organisations.

6.1. Economic assistance

In Albania, families receiving no income from economic activities, social aid programmes, capital transfers and/or remittances from family members working abroad, are entitled to full economic assistance. There is also partial economic assistance, which applies to families receiving some income – albeit insufficient – from farming, pensions and/or other sources. Typically, full economic assistance is received by families living in urban areas, while families living in rural areas are generally served by the partial assistance scheme. According to the survey, 24.2 per cent of Roma and 33.6 per cent of Egyptian respondents receive “economic assistance” from the government, which is either partial or

full. This assistance is used to partially cover their subsistence needs. However, the number of poor Roma and Egyptian families that should benefit from the economic assistance scheme is much higher.

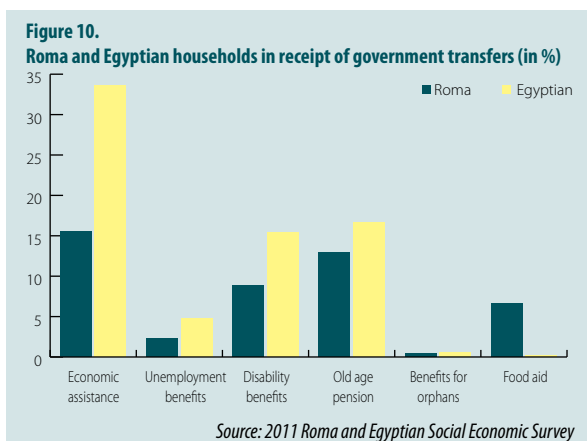
The reasons why many poor Roma and Egyptian families do not receive any economic assistance are varied. Poor Roma families in Fushë-Kruja and some families of the *Bamilli* clan in Levan, for instance, do not receive any economic assistance because according to local officials of their respective municipality/commune, they should have been given agricultural land²⁴. Some families do not receive any economic assistance because, due to their low educational level, they are not able to fill out the application papers. Many other families which have migrated to Shkodra, Kukës, Peshkopia, Tirana, Durrës, Saranda, etc., in the recent years, do not receive any economic assistance because the law stipulates that beneficiaries must have been registered at one given address from 1993²⁵. According to data from the survey, nearly 48 per cent of Roma and 31 per cent of Egyptians moved in the early 1990s, thus rendering themselves ineligible for “economic assistance” according to these criteria.

A second issue is the efficiency (or lack thereof) of the economic assistance scheme itself, including the size of its budget. The size of the economic assistance depends on the money allocated by the government to the municipalities and communes and the number of members of the potential beneficiary’s household. In principle, the size of economic assistance transfers ranges from a minimum of 800 ALL to a maximum of 7,500 ALL per month. In 2009, partial economic assistance amounted to an average of 3,100 ALL, while full economic assistance came to 3,900 ALL per month (Shahollari, 2010). Understandably, many Roma and Egyptian individuals point out that ‘economic assistance’ is far from sufficient for meeting their everyday needs.

23. These data should be interpreted with some caution as many Roma households underreported economic assistance in their responses. Official data from MoLSAEO show that around 1,200 Roma families are in receipt of partial or full economic assistance.

24. According to interviews held with Roma families who migrated from Halil to Fushë Kruja and those from the Bamill tribe in Levan have not been given any land.

25. Law No. 7710, Dated 18.5.1993, “On social assistance and social care”.



In certain cases, receiving economic assistance incurs additional costs. Thus, families that have migrated to different areas of the country such as to Kukës, Peshkopia, etc., are obliged to return to their hometown to receive economic assistance payments.

BOX 4

Hasan, a Roma leader from the Driza village confirms this when he says: "Many of the families living here receive social assistance. There are about 120 families receiving it, but the need is much greater than that". Floresha, a Roma woman from Selita, complains: "I have three orphans and I do not receive any economic assistance. I have knocked on every door. They say, 'you are not from here' so I don't get anything. I have asked everywhere but they just make me waste my time ...". Other Roma and Egyptian families do not receive any economic assistance if any of their members has been, or still is, a migrant abroad²⁶. Baki, a Roma man living in Kavaja says: "We receive our economic assistance in Peqin, not here. My family has six members and I receive 50,000 Leks in assistance. I go there twice a month, from the 5th to the 17th to prepare the papers and then on the 27th to receive the assistance".

6.2. Old age pensions

The number of Roma and Egyptian households receiving old age pensions is small. According to the survey, only 12.5 per cent of Roma and 16.7 per cent of Egyptian households are in receipt of old age

pensions. According to the relevant law²⁷, people qualify for a full pension when they are 65 years old (for women, the pension age is 60 years old) and have paid social contributions for at least 35 years. Given the socio-economic profile of Roma and Egyptian communities, these are quite difficult preconditions for them to meet. The situation arises mainly because Roma (and to a lesser degree, Egyptians) have historically worked in the informal sector (especially during and after Albania's post-socialist transition). Consequently most of them do not have the required number of working years, or have not made the necessary financial contributions to qualify for full or partial retirement pensions²⁸. By way of example, today 93% of Roma and 88% of Egyptians do not pay any social contributions. Moreover, a considerable number of those who fulfil the conditions, are still not eligible due to missing employment paperwork and other relevant certificates, or simply do not know how to apply.

BOX 5

Shpresa, a Roma woman from the Kombinat area in Tirana, says: "We are pensioners. I receive a full pension, while my husband gets half pension because his documents got burned". Agim, a Roma man from Bregu i Lumit in Tirana, says "... I get no pension at all. I am 66 years old and I have no pension. I worked for 25 years as furnace worker in state enterprises and my wife also worked. She doesn't get a pension either".

6.3. Disability payments

Disability payments are monthly cash payments for individuals with physical, mental or sensory disabilities (INSTAT, 2003). Data from the survey show that 10.4 per cent of Roma and 15.4 per cent of Egyptian households receive disability payments. This figure is slightly higher compared to the majority population and reflects the comparatively poorer health status of that community. However, many

26. Pursuant to Decision of the Council of Ministers No. 787, dated 14.12.2005, "On defining the criteria, procedures and size of economic assistance".

27. Law No. 7703, dated 11.5.1993, "On Social Insurance in the Republic of Albania".

28. Partial pension is received by individuals (65 years of age for men and 65 years of age for women) who have been paying social insurance contributions for at least 15 years and less than 35 years.

Roma and Egyptian families who have a disabled member do not receive this benefit because they find it difficult to complete the required administrative and legal documentation²⁹. Mereme, a Roma woman from Selita, Tirana, tells about her son, “Yes, he is deaf and mute and talks very little for his age. He looks like a two or three year-old boy.... I was told to apply for disability allowance for my son. So far we have received nothing.” Often disability payments are the only source of income for the family. Such is the case of Zenepe, a Roma woman from Shkoza, and her family. She explains, “My elderly father was ill. He was given invalidity status and now we all live on the money he receives. We are unemployed, we have nothing.”

6.4. Unemployment benefits

A very small number of Roma (0.3%) and Egyptians (4.8%) receive unemployment benefits, which mirrors their precarious status in the labour market. In Albania, unemployment benefits are paid out for a maximum of one year, to people who are unemployed and have paid their social insurance contributions for a period of at least 12 months. The survey shows that unemployment among Roma is long-term and at least 23 per cent of them state they have been out of work for 5 years or longer. Moreover, as Roma and Egyptians work mainly in the informal economy (collection of scrap metal, trade in second hand clothes, odd jobs, etc.), very few of them make any social insurance contributions. As such, they do not qualify for unemployment benefits when they find themselves out of work.

6.5. Benefits for orphans

Only 0.6 per cent of Roma and 0.1 per cent of Egyptian households report to be in receipt of benefits for orphans. Again, many eligible families miss out, even if they are eligible. Such is the case of Haxhire, an elderly woman from Fushë-Kruja, who says, “I have 6 orphans under my care, who have no father or mother. They need

help. Their father died and their mother remarried and left the children to me.” Luljeta, a Roma woman from Levan has a similar story, “I have four children of my own and two are my brother-in-law’s. They are orphans; their parents were killed in a car accident. But we do not receive any orphan benefits for them.”

The interviews revealed that quite a few Roma and Egyptian families either lack the necessary information, or are not able complete the application procedures and paperwork necessary to receive orphan’s benefits.

6.6. Conclusions and recommendations

Poverty levels among the Roma and Egyptian households are very high and the gap between them and the majority population has been growing. Poor and very poor Roma and Egyptian families face high levels of social exclusion because they are less able to meet their everyday needs and less likely to participate in the processes that have a direct bearing on their lives, such as employment and education.

Due to their poverty, many Roma and Egyptian households have to rely on alternative sources of income, such as economic assistance, old age pensions, unemployment benefits, disability benefits, and orphans’ benefits. On the one hand, these government transfers are hardly adequate to meet the needs of poor Roma and Egyptian households. On the other, many Roma and Egyptian families are either excluded from social assistance schemes, or do not receive it for as long as it is necessary. For instance, unemployment benefits are only granted for a maximum period of 12 months, at a time when unemployment among the Roma and Egyptians is much longer term. Unable to find jobs in the formal market, many Roma and Egyptians get casual employment in the informal sector and are not able to pay any social security contributions, which makes them ineligible for old-age pensions later in life. Economic assistance is offered subject to certain conditions, which many Roma and Egyptian families in need cannot meet. Consequently, we end up with a social welfare paradigm where social assistance for the poor is determined, but often “the poorest of the poor” are unable to access it.

29. In order to qualify for receiving disability benefits payments an individual must go through the following steps: see a family doctor, see a consultant for a specialized examination, go to hospital for a check-up and medical report, and appear before a panel for a final assessment.

Recommendations:

- In relation to economic assistance, it is recommended that Roma community members be treated as a special group, given their special needs and their way of life. In this respect, the economic assistance scheme needs to take into account the fact that Roma community members often move from one region to another. However, their mobility should not lead to their exclusion from the scheme on grounds that they do not have a fixed abode.
- The qualitative data (interviews and focus groups) show that many Roma families migrate internally for short periods of time. Therefore, their economic assistance should be transferable to the area where the Roma family has settled, in order to reduce the costs of benefitting from it.
- Additionally, Roma and Egyptian communities would benefit from being helped with information and practical assistance in completing the required paperwork for claiming economic assistance. This is necessary because some Roma (and fewer Egyptians) are illiterate and therefore unable to complete the applications by themselves.
- In relation to old age pensions, the government could help by launching a scheme to help workers recuperate any unrecognised reckonable years of service. This should of course include members of the Roma and Egyptian communities who used to work for state-owned enterprises during the socialist period. Provision of assistance in filling out the paperwork is also necessary in the case of old age pensions applications.
- Awareness raising campaigns on the importance of pensions, pension schemes, and pension contributions. These can be carried out in cooperation with Roma and Egyptian NGOs in their communities.
- Assistance with completing paperwork should be extended to include disability benefits and benefits for parentless orphans or social orphans.
- Lastly, further steps need to be taken to ensure that all children are registered at civil registry offices and provided with birth certificates at birth so that they are immediately eligible for all the relevant benefits and don't slip through the net.

VII. Employment

7.1. The informality factor and other features shared by Roma and Egyptians

Due to factors such as poverty and social exclusion, most Roma and Egyptians work in low qualified jobs in the informal sector. These kinds of jobs can hardly provide them with adequate earnings to support their families. The data show that 95.9% of the Roma and 88.7% of Egyptians in employment do not have employment contracts.

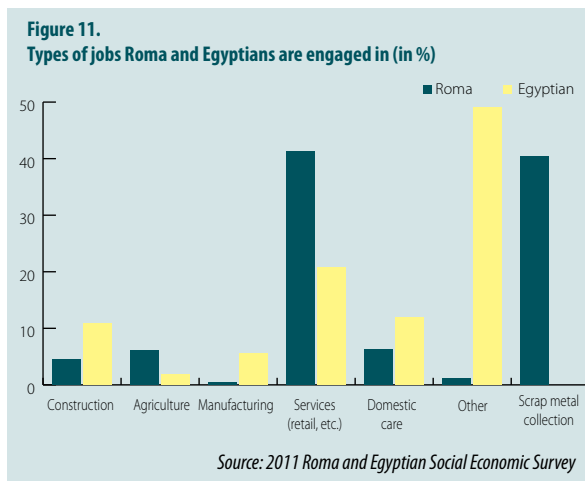
The situation is further worsened by the fact that even those individuals who are in employment do not pay social security contributions. The survey found that nearly 93.1% of the Roma and 88.3% of Egyptians do not pay social security contributions, which affects their eligibility for various social welfare schemes, including health cards.

7.2. Roma employment profile

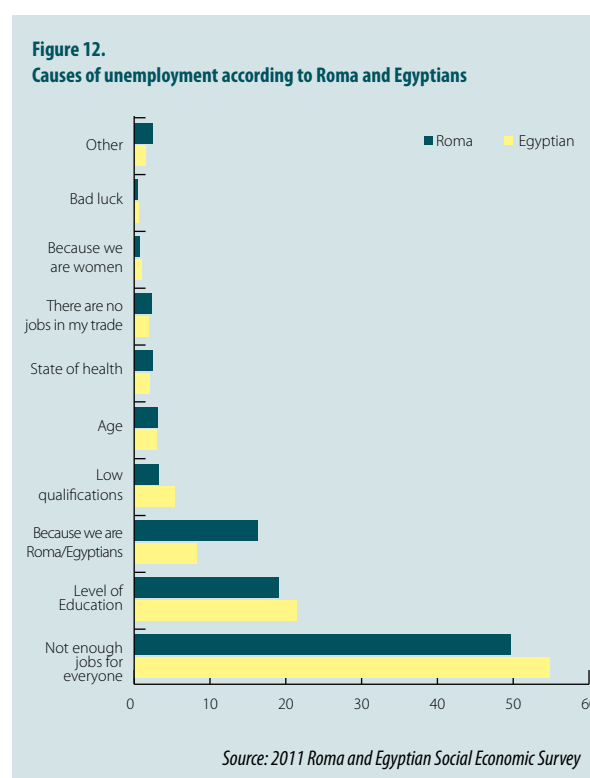
Asked whether they had worked in the past seven days, 50.3% of Roma respondents reported they had not. The Roma are characterised by high inactivity levels, as seen in their answers: only 38.3% say they are looking for work while 61.7% admit they are not seeking employment. In addition, the percentage of unemployed registered with the employment offices is very low (20.7%) compared to the number of unregistered unemployed (78.7%). The majority of Roma (82.8%) report that they work in unqualified jobs, mostly in buying and selling second-hand clothes (40.7%) and collection of scrap metals and cans (42%).

Despite their low employment and education levels, Roma community members who have registered with employment offices admit they have not benefitted from vocational courses offered by vocational training centres (86.1% report they have not benefitted from any free course, as compared to the 13.1% who say they have). Most of the respondents (64.6%) say the main reason

for this is “lack of information” (Figure 11). The next two reasons mentioned are because “they have not registered as unemployed” (14.5%) and they ‘do not believe this would increase their chances of employment’ (10.7%).

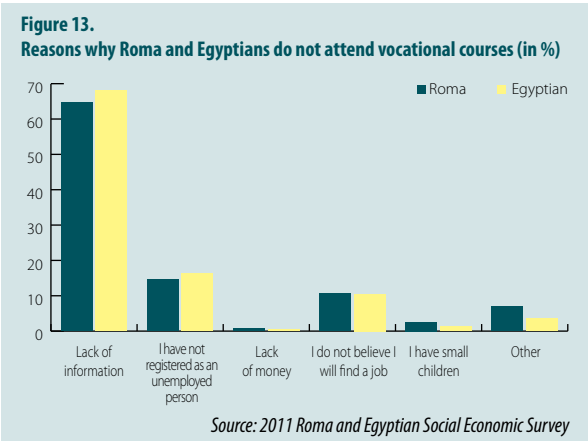


To the question about the causes of their lack of employment (figure 12), Roma respondents mentioned three main causes: not enough jobs to go around (50%), low level of education (19.2%) and because they are Roma (16.4%).



7.3. Egyptian employment profile

Asked about their employment situation, 57.6% of the Egyptian respondents reported they had not worked in the last seven days. The inactivity quotient is also high among Egyptians, as 56.9% report to not be looking for a job. The percentage of individuals registered with employment offices is 29.9%. Similarly to the Roma, Egyptian community members also report they work in low skilled jobs (84.4%). They are mainly employed in the services industry (20.7%), domestic care (12%), and construction (10.8%). Forty nine per cent report that they do “other jobs”.



A large number of those who are actually registered with employment offices (95.5%) say they do not benefit from any free vocational courses. According to them, the main reason for this is lack of information (68.1%). A further 16.2% report they were not able to attend any of the courses because they of their failure to register as unemployed. Similarly to the Roma, Egyptian respondents also said that the reasons for their difficulties in getting employment were, “not enough jobs to go around” (54.8%) and their “low level of education” (21.4%).

7.4. Conclusions and Recommendations

Roma and Egyptian communities encounter numerous barriers in accessing employment, education, and vocational training. A large majority are not registered with employment offices and do not receive any social benefits. Due to poverty

and the economic hardships Roma and Egyptians have historically faced, they lack education and, consequently, find it difficult to find employment. Lack of education and vocational training, which lead to lack of employment and social security, place further constraints on Roma and Egyptian communities and impoverish them even more, thus preventing them from breaking the vicious circle. In addition, poverty and lack of social assistance create barriers to their education, making the improvement of their circumstances even more difficult.

Recommendations

1. The two communities need vocational training programmes that address both the needs of the market and the individual needs of the trainees. A study of the labour market conditions would be useful to inform the development of the vocational training curricula.
2. According to the survey data, the number of Roma and Egyptians engaged in the collection of scrap metals and cans has been steadily increasing. This is also related to their internal or seasonal migration moves. One solution that could improve Roma and Egyptian employment rates and earnings is by setting up social businesses. These can be conceived as partnerships between Roma and Egyptian community members, local authorities (municipality/commune) and a banking organisation. A foundation could conduct a preliminary study on the feasibility of the social business, and provide leadership to the project. The Roma and Egyptian community members would benefit in terms of employment and better working conditions, higher earnings, legalisation of their businesses, and increased participation in social security schemes. Higher earnings would be secured by the direct sale of collected materials to major wholesalers, thus bypassing the middle men who eat up large portions of the profit. Local governments also have a vested interest in securing formal employment

opportunities for Roma and Egyptians. Their employment would eventually lead to reduced economic assistance pay-outs for these groups in the future. In addition, getting jobs in one of these social businesses could carry the prerequisite that the employees make sure their children attend school or kindergarten. Moreover, these schemes would provide the local government with a better system for recycling urban waste. A warehouse could also be provided as a site for the collection and packaging of waste materials, as well as vehicles for their transportation. The banking institutions would contribute by maintaining the financial discipline needed in running the business and safeguarding a

portion of the earnings of each Roma and Egyptian worker in savings accounts. The money could be used to pay social housing instalments. If the scheme proves successful, the initiative could be extended to cover other sectors of the economy and other regions of the country.

3. Credit schemes consisting of credit and business training packages provided by specialised institutions can be applied as a strategy to help Roma and Egyptians who have set up small businesses or are self-employed. This could also be extended to cover those Roma and Egyptians who return from international migration with skills that could be used to set up a business in Albania.

VIII. Internal and international migration of Roma and Egyptians

Mass long-term unemployment in the formal economy forces Roma and Egyptians to seek employment in the informal sector, in scrap metal collection, trade in second hand clothes, various casual jobs, and begging. When these opportunities are all exhausted and their earnings are not enough to meet everyday needs, Roma and Egyptians resort to internal and international migration. Migration and remittances are perceived as effective methods to cope with economic hardship.

8.1. Internal migration

The survey found that during the first years of post-socialist transition, 17.4 per cent of the Roma and 16.2 per cent of the Egyptians moved to other places – forced by economic and social factors or pushed by the majority population. For instance, many Roma migrated from Halil village to Fushë-Kruja, others moved from Berat to Elbasan, from other towns to Tirana etc. Migratory movements have continued with the same intensity in the past ten years. According to the survey, 30.3 per cent of the Roma and 14.6% of the Egyptians have migrated to Tirana, Shkodra, Milot, Kukës, Peshkopia, Kavaja, Saranda, Gjirokastra, Përmet, Himara, etc. At present, many of the families live in camping sites, lacking in the most basic infrastructure and in very difficult socio-economic conditions. Others move to different parts of the same district, from villages to towns or to other villages. Consequently the Roma are spreading all over Albania and the configuration of their settlements is constantly changing.

Even though mobility is a feature of all Roma communities, their major settlements are in Fushë-Kruja, Kthesa e Ariut, Tirana, Rrapishta near Elbasan, Gosa village near Kavaja, Rrom village near Fier, Peqin, Cërrik, Berat, Rrogozhina and to a lesser extent, in Bilishti, Korça, etc. At the time of the survey, Roma from Fushë-Kruja could be found in Shkodra, Beltoja, Ura e Drojës, Kukës, Peshkopia, Milot, Ura e Dajlanit

and Vrion near Saranda, etc. Other Roma, originally from Rrapishta, were living in Shkodra, Fushë Ali and Shupenza in Peshkopia, Farka and Shkoza near Tirana, Shkozet near Durrës, Saranda and Qafa e Vishës near Himara. In the summer we found Roma from Bilishti in Shkozet near Durrës, Erseka, etc. Numerous questions arise from this. Why has Roma mobility increased in the recent years, especially to certain enclaves, and what factors are pushing them? What impact do these processes have on their children's living conditions, education and health? Will Roma mobility continue at the same rate in the future? Or are they simply sporadic processes, related perhaps to a return to their "traditional" or nomadic way of living? And, of course, what practical conclusions can be drawn?

Empirical data show that the main drivers of internal migration are unemployment, low incomes and poverty. Nearly half of the Roma respondents were unemployed and their unemployment is long-term. In the absence of employment in the formal market, they work mostly in the informal sector, usually as traders in second-hand clothes. This occupation has been their main source of household income since 1991, especially for the *Karbunxhi* and *Cergari* clans, who have traditionally been small traders. In 2005 some researchers warned that "their earnings are decreasing" and that "if no sustainable alternatives are developed, their economic welfare will be at risk" (De Soto *et al.*, 2005). In the recent years, Roma households have been earning considerably less – or not at all – from the buying and selling of used clothes, due to lower demand and increased competition. The survey found that there is a shift of informal employment, from trading in second-hand clothes to the collection of scrap metals and cans. At present, 42 per cent of Roma work in this industry. Against a general backdrop of limited resources, a growing number of Roma involved in the collection of scrap metals and cans meet tougher competition and their earnings decline. In these circumstances many Roma choose to migrate to other cities where there is less competition.

Internal migration makes it more difficult for Roma and Egyptians to have access to public and social services. Informal migration (i.e. migrants who do not register with the authorities at their new place) further



contributes to the exclusion of Roma and Egyptian communities from basic services, with children and the elderly suffering the most.

Internal migration trends are set to continue in the future and the Roma and Egyptian families will spread to other regions of the country. Migration is a coping mechanism - perhaps the most important one in coping with poverty. On the one hand, migration helps Roma and Egyptians survive in the short term. On the other, it has adverse consequences for the families, especially the children. It affects the children's education, health and economic security. Their employment opportunities will continue to be limited to unskilled jobs, characterised by high uncertainty and low income. Consequently, the Roma and Egyptians will continue to remain stuck in the poverty trap.

8.2. International migration

Roma and Egyptians started migrating right at the start of Albania's transition to a market economy. International migration is short term and long term.

Short term migration

Of the Roma and Egyptians who migrate for short periods of time, most go to neighbouring countries such as Greece and Kosovo. A distinction can be drawn between those who go to work in Greece and those who go to Kosovo.

Generally, those who migrate to Greece are Roma and Egyptians from Southern Albania who possess some human, financial, and social capital. According to the survey, nearly 80% of the Roma and 72% of Egyptians who migrated at some point in their lives went to Greece for short periods of time. At present many of them migrate on work visas and do seasonal jobs on farms. Roma and Egyptians from the villages of Devoll, Korça, Gjirokastra, Vlora, Fier, Lushnjë, etc., work mostly in harvesting tobacco, beans, olives, peaches and apples, mainly in the areas close to the border, but also further inland. Others migrate on tourist visas, but their chances of getting any work are slim. Seasonal migration is important because it helps increase earnings and diversifies sources of income for Roma and Egyptian families. In some cases, remittances from seasonal migration are the main source of family income, which could lead to dependence on it.

Those who do not possess any capital generally migrate to Kosovo. According to the survey, 6.4% of Roma and 2.9% of Egyptians who have had migration experiences, go for short-term spells to Kosovo, where they are involved in begging and collection and resale of scrap metals.

Short term migration helps diversify sources of income and alleviate extreme poverty, but it cannot lift Roma and Egyptian families from the cycle of poverty.

Long term migration

There is a link between short-term and long-term migration. A study on Roma migrants conducted by the Soros Foundation (2012) found that nearly 48% of the respondents had migrated several times for short periods of time before ultimately settling in Greece. For instance, many Roma community members from Zinxhiraj initially migrated to Greece every year for short periods, until they felt ready to settle there permanently. The Roma from Delvina initially migrated to Greece as seasonal migrant workers to settle there permanently in 1997.

There are no reliable official statistics on long-term international migration, however, the phenomenon is quite common among the members of some Roma and Egyptian settlements, including those in Xarë, Delvinë, Zinxhiraj near Gjirokastra, Morava, Levan, Grabian, Llakatund, Novoselë, etc., where between 30 and 60 per cent of the families have migrated abroad. In the autumn of 2011, for instance, only 56 Roma families remained in Zinxhiraj, near Gjirokastra (UNICEF, 2012) while 82 other families, who left the village, were living in camp sites on the outskirts of Ioannina, Greece (Soros Foundation, 2012).

The survey found that in 2011, about 11% of the Roma and 4% of the Egyptian households had members living abroad, mainly in Greece and Italy, but also in other European countries. Preferred countries of immigration for Roma and Egyptians are neighbouring countries such as Greece (73.5 per cent of Roma and 38.2 per cent of Egyptian respondents) and Italy (15.7 per cent of Roma and 54.9 per cent of Egyptian respondents). The reasons for choosing these countries are related to better employment opportunities, pre-established social networks, knowledge of the respective language and country, and better chances of higher earnings and

savings. Social networks play an important role in the migration process, as they assist migrants with shelter, food and employment, reducing costs and risks.

International migration of the Roma developed in three different phases, closely reflecting the economic, political and social state of the country. The first phase (1990-1995), coincided with the dismantlement of the socialist system, the opening of the country's borders, and launch of economic reforms which led to a severe economic crisis. The crisis, also known as the "transition crisis" caused mass unemployment, which in some Roma and Egyptian settlements reached up to 80 – 90% (De Soto *et al.*, 2005). According to the survey, nearly 14.3 per cent of the Roma migrated illegally during this period. Personal connections with other Roma in Greece played an important role in helping them find jobs, accommodation, and safety, since the Greek police never searched for illegal migrants in Roma settlements (Mavrommatis, 2004).

The second phase (1997-2002), occurred in the wake of the fall of pyramid schemes at the end of 1996, and the political and social chaos that followed. Nearly 28.6 per cent of the remaining Roma migrated during this period. The third wave (2006-2010) was related to the worsening of social and economic conditions of Roma families. According to the survey, 49 per cent of the Roma migrated during this period.

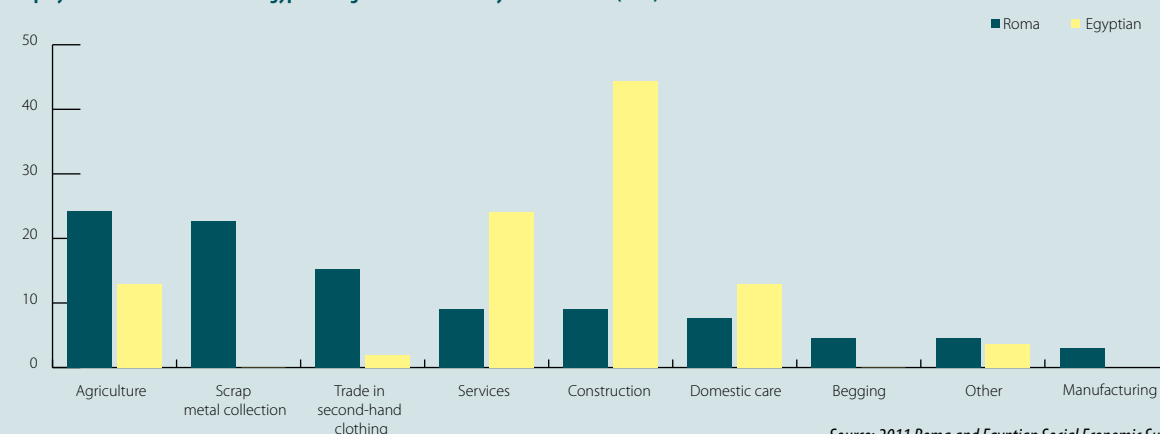
Who migrates?

Empirical data show that Roma and Egyptian migrants are mainly young (64 per cent of Roma and 51 per cent of Egyptian migrants are between 17 and 40 years of age), male, and relatively better educated than the rest of community. The survey shows that Roma and Egyptian migrants in Italy come mainly from the Western regions of Albania, while those in Greece come from the south.

Causes of migration

The survey found that economic factors such as unemployment, low incomes, the wish to have a better life, lack of economic assistance, and debts are the main push-factors that support the international migration process. Grouped together they represent more than four fifths of push factors. A Soros Foundation study (2012), which focused mostly on Roma migrants in Greece and Italy, found that another significant push

Figure 14.
Employment sectors of Roma and Egyptian migrants in the country of destination (in %)



factor was “fear of war/civil conflict/persecution”, most likely stemming from the political and social chaos of 1997 and its aftermath.

Sectors of employment

Among the most common sectors of Roma employment are farming, scrap metal collection, trade in second-hand clothes, services, construction, domestic services, and begging. Egyptians, on the other hand, work mainly in construction, services, agriculture and domestic services (figure 14). A division of work along gender lines is obvious. Men work mainly in agriculture, scrap metal collection and construction. Females are mainly engaged in domestic services, tin collection, agriculture, services, and begging.

Education has played an important role in improving employment opportunities and the social status of Roma and Egyptian migrants. Mavrommatis (2004) notes that, unlike the Greek Roma³⁰, all the Albanian Roma who migrated to Greece in the early 1990s had only completed primary (8-year) education. Initially they were employed by Greek Roma, working in construction or various trading activities. Gradually, as they became more integrated in the Greek society and economy and their status was legalised, they started working for non-Roma entrepreneurs or established their own businesses.

In addition, they began to leave Roma settlements and identified themselves as Albanian migrants.

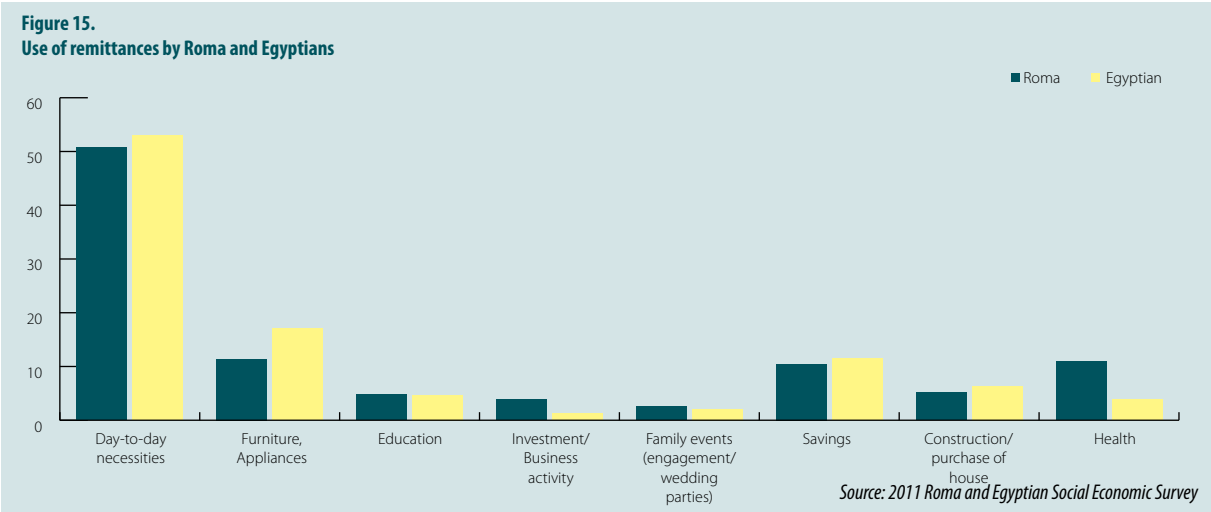
A comparison of the survey data with the findings of the 2005 study by De Soto *et al*, shows that in the recent years there has been a shift in occupational patterns, from construction, farming, collection of second-hand clothes and begging, towards collection of scrap metals. This occupational shift is inevitably accompanied by a decline in their qualifications.

Remittances

About per cent of Roma and 80 per cent of Egyptian families who have migrant relatives abroad say they receive remittances from them. The migrants send money through Western Union (43.6% of the Roma and 61.9% of the Egyptians), carry them with themselves when they travel back home (25.6% of Roma and 19% of Egyptians) or send them with friends (20.5% of Roma and 19% of Egyptians). Others make bank transfers, or ask coach drivers who travel regularly to Albania, to hand in their money, for a certain fee. The size of remittances is generally not considerable (470 Euro a years for Roma and 652 Euro a year for Egyptians) and is a reflection of their income.³¹ According to the survey data, the largest

30. According to some estimations, in the mid-1990s, 60 to 80 per cent of the Greek Roma between 18 and 50 years were illiterate.

31. A 2010 CESS study found that in 2009 Albanian migrants sent to their families in Albania an average of 2,074 Euro in remittances (IOM, UNDP, WB. *The Global Crisis and Migration: Monitoring a Key Transmission Channel in the Albanian Economy*. Tirana, September 2010).

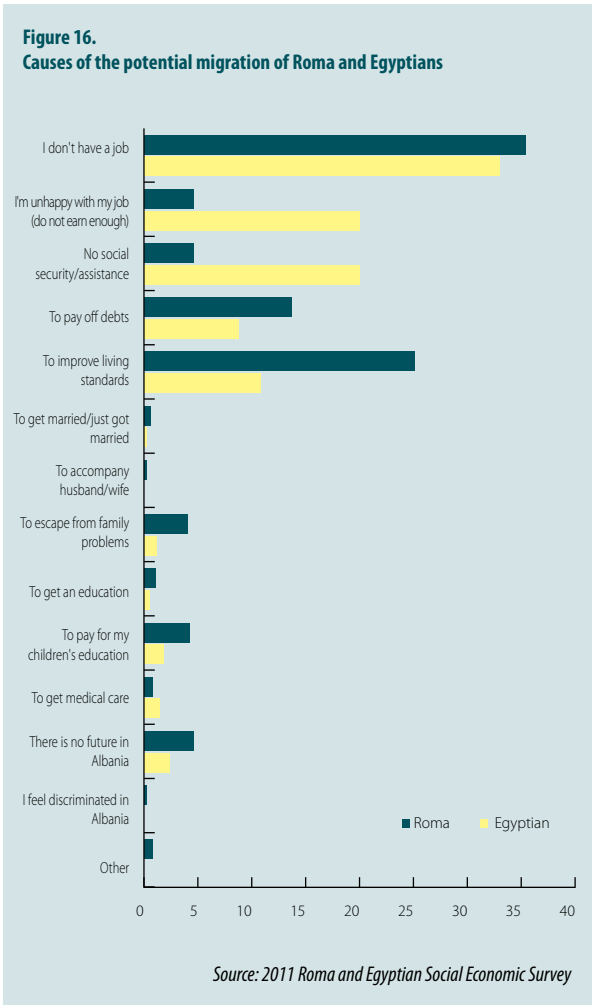


portion of remittances is used to meet the households' subsistence needs (food, clothes), improve their living conditions (buying furniture or appliances), and on health. The rest is placed in savings accounts, put towards building or buying a house, or education. Only some families use the remittances as investments in their business activities (figure 15). In the short term, remittances from international migration help alleviate the poverty of the families receiving them. However, their long term effect is that they reinforce poverty and social exclusion, as no new jobs are created.

8.3. Potential Migration of Roma and Egyptians

The survey found that 30.9% of Roma and 21.5% of the Egyptians between 18 and 40 years of age wish to migrate abroad. The wish to migrate is more pronounced among men (40.3% for Roma and 30% for Egyptians), the better educated, and the poor, and peaks with the 31-35 age group for Roma and 36-40 age group for Egyptians. The wish to migrate is less pronounced among the majority population, where this indicator was estimated at 44% (ETF, 2008). On the one hand, this is explained by the economic crises that has gripped the neighbouring countries, especially Greece; and on the other, by the inadequate human, social and financial capital possessed by the Roma and Egyptian families.

Potential migration expresses a trend the realisation of which is conditioned by the human, financial and social capital possessed by the individual wishing to migrate. In a study on poverty in Albania, De Soto *et al.* (2002) emphasise that *the poorest of the poor* are not



able to migrate. For this purpose, we came up with an indicator to measure the tendency to migrate, based on the ability to afford the trip abroad, information on the country of immigration, possession of the necessary documents, and whether they intended to migrate within the next six months or the next two years. According to this indicator, only 9.5% of Roma and 3.3% of Egyptians respondents are able to migrate.

Preferred countries of immigration for Roma and Egyptians are neighbouring Greece (73.5 per cent for Roma and 38.2 per cent for Egyptians) and Italy (15.7 per cent for Roma and 54.9 per cent for Egyptians). Others express the wish to migrate to other EU countries (10 per cent of Roma and 2.1% of Egyptians). The reasons for choosing these countries are related to better employment opportunities and higher earnings, cost of living, pre-existence social networks, knowledge of the language and country, and saving opportunities.

A characteristic feature of Roma migration compared to the Egyptians and the majority population is that most of them want to migrate just for short periods of time (Table 4). A second characteristic of Roma and Egyptian migration is that they wish to migrate together with their families.

The survey found that Roma and Egyptians are informed about migration, employment opportunities, etc. Their main sources of information on migration are 'family and friends in the country of immigration' (29.4% of Roma and 18.6% of Egyptians), 'radio and TV' (25.8% of Roma and 28.7% of Egyptians) and 'family and friends in Albania' (25.3% of Roma and 29.9% of Egyptians).

In the country of immigration, the Roma expect to do unqualified jobs, such as scrap metal and second-hand clothes collection, agriculture, construction, domestic services and begging. On the one hand, this

mirrors their very low qualifications and education, and on the other, it reproduces the work they do in Albania. Egyptians say they wish to work in services, construction, scrap metal and second-hand clothes collection, and a fewer number in farming.

Nearly 50% of Roma and 75% of Egyptians aspiring to migrate think that preparatory training courses would be useful in finding jobs in the country of immigration. In addition, 69% of Roma and 94% of Egyptians state they would like to participate in such trainings. These could be vocational courses (76% of Roma and 64% of Egyptians) and language courses (21% of the Roma and 19% of the Egyptians).

8.4. Return migration

In addition to migration, there is a parallel process of return migration, which has accelerated in the past two years because of the worsening of the financial and economic crisis that has gripped Greece. From the interviews and focus group discussions it transpired that return to the home country is an alternative widely discussed by Roma and Egyptian migrants and some have started making arrangements.

An accelerated return of Roma and Egyptian migrants might cause one of the two following scenarios. The first is that the return of migrants, especially those who because of their low qualifications and involvement in the informal market do not possess financial and human capital, may increase the pressure brought to bear on the labour market. In the absence of jobs, many Roma and Egyptians – especially in urban areas – will turn to the informal sector, especially scrap metal collection, thus causing a drop in the earnings of Roma and Egyptian families working in the sector. This would lead to higher poverty levels among Roma and Egyptian households.

The second scenario, although this involves only

Table 4. Length of stay of Roma and Egyptians in country of immigration (in %)

No.	Group	< 1 year	1-2 years	3-5 years	5-10 years	> 10 years	Forever
1	Roma	45.3	22.1	14.9	2.8	5.0	9.9
2	Egyptians	12.2	14	15.8	3.6	30.3	24

Source: 2011 Roma and Egyptian Social Economic Survey

small part of Roma and Egyptians, is more optimistic and relates to the transfer of financial, human and social capitals acquired in the immigration country to their home country. The investment of these capitals would create new jobs, first and foremost for Roma and Egyptian family members. Previous experiences in Albania have shown that some returned migrants have opened small businesses, mainly in the services sector. However, this scenario has a precondition, which is the existence of a favourable economic, social and institutional environment in Albania. It may be helped along by offering soft loans to migrants' businesses, training programs in support of their businesses, micro-credit programs in rural areas, establishment of investment consultancy agencies, setting up or strengthening employment agencies, etc.

8.5. Conclusions and recommendations

Internal and international migration is a key mechanism employed by Roma and Egyptians to cope with poverty and social exclusion. It is one of the primary factors that can distinguish between "very poor" and "poor" families. However, for many Roma and Egyptian families migration has not brought long-term benefits and has not enabled them to break the poverty cycle.

Although the potential migration indicator for Roma and Egyptians is not high, local authorities, Roma and Egyptian NGOs and specialised institutions must carry out information campaigns in Roma and Egyptian settlements on the opportunities and risks involved in migration, employment, official channels for transferring their remittances, etc. On the one hand, this would help prevent asylum claims³² in EU countries and on the other, it would facilitate the migration and return cycles.

Vocational training of Roma and Egyptians in their own country would improve their chances of employment and increase their earnings in the host country. According to the survey, the majority of potential migrants would prefer to attend vocational,

language and cultural courses. The MLSAEO must introduce quotas for the inclusion of Roma and Egyptian community members in various seasonal employment schemes abroad. This would encourage Roma and Egyptians to seek qualifications and would reduce the poverty of many families.

Albanian embassies and consulates, mainly in Greece and Albania, must look into the living conditions and problems faced by Roma and Egyptian migrants, especially those living in campsites and shacks. In these settlements there are frequent cases of human rights violations by local authorities³³, children who are not registered with the civil registry offices (both in their home country and host country)³⁴, cases of trafficking, etc.

Roma and Egyptians generally migrate as a family. However, many of them have left behind their parents (Gëdeshi and Jorgoni, 2012), who live in a state of abandonment and extreme poverty (many do not receive any pensions and have any other alternative sources of income)³⁵. A change of policy in this regard, in the form of revising *economic assistance* for which even people whose family members have migrated abroad are eligible, would be helpful. In addition local authorities and their mobile medical teams must provide health care services to them.

As the financial and economic crisis deepens in Greece, local authorities in some districts of the country (Gjirokastër, Korçë, Elbasan, etc.) must prepare for an eventual return of Roma and Egyptian migrants. In that event, there would be an increase of demand on social services (children's education, improvement of the infrastructure,

32. In July 2012, for instance, forty Roma from Albania settled in Albi, a small town near Toulouse, and claimed asylum in France.

33. In Greece there have been several cases where Roma families were expelled from their settlements with no compensation or housing alternatives. In July 2005, about 70 Roma families from Albania, living in Votaniko camp site in Athens, were expelled by force, with no prior notice and no other housing alternatives offered to them. In June 2007, another 100 Roma families were expelled from Votaniko in Athens.

34. According to a 2012 Soros Foundation study, the number of unregistered Roma children is higher among those who have migrated from Albania to Greece, than in Albania. According to the study, 13.9% of the children aged between 0 and 7 years are not registered.

35. De Soto et al. (2002) in their study on Albanian migration, call the elderly left behind "orphaned pensioners." The Roma and Egyptians who are not in receipt of any pensions are called "orphaned elderly".

health care, economic assistance, etc.)

Returning Roma and Egyptian migrants possessing financial and human capital must be encouraged to invest in the local economy. Local authorities must encourage them to take part in credit schemes,

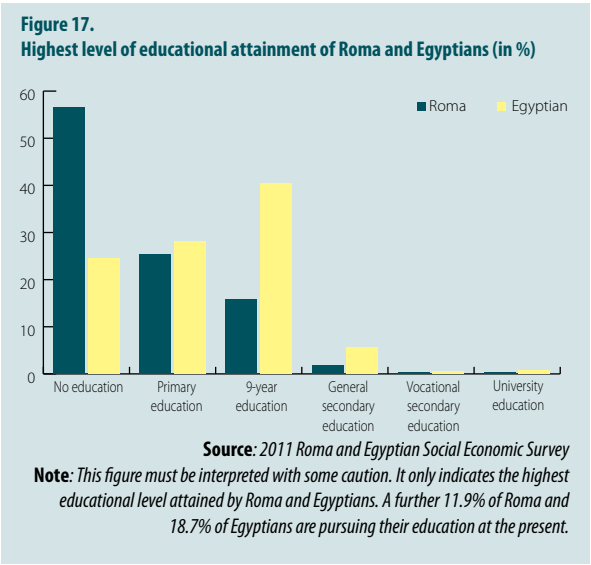
training and business orientation programmes, etc.

In addition, the government must look into securing employment for unqualified Roma and Egyptians who return to the country, in order to alleviate the pressure on the labour market and social services.

IX. Education

By the end of World War II, the Roma and, to a lesser extent, the Egyptians in Albania were largely illiterate. Their nomadic traditions and particular way of life, their poverty and discrimination, were among the main factors accounting for this situation. In describing the nomadic nature of the Roma in the 1930s, Hasluck (1938) noted that they sometimes “would settle in one town for several months”, but then go back to their “tent life” again. In such circumstances, education of Roma children was difficult. The educational status of the Egyptian population, which was more settled and more integrated, was somewhat different. Stuart Mann (1933) noted that “many of their children went to school”.

The educational level of Roma and Egyptians improved significantly during the socialist period, due to the educational policies and measures taken to integrate them in society. In the 1960s the Roma were settling in certain set areas and they were guaranteed full employment by the state. This, coupled with provision of housing and improvement of living standards led to an increase in their education levels (De Soto *et al.*, 2005). A 2012 UNICEF study found that the level of illiteracy among Roma aged between 35 and 45 years (i.e. who had started school between 1973 and 1983), dropped to 30.6 per cent. Those who attended school did so for an average of 6.6 years (Gëdeshi and Jorgoni, 2011).



In the post-socialist transition years there was a marked decline in the level of educational attainment of Roma and Egyptians. High levels of unemployment and poverty, discrimination and social exclusion, led to a decline in their educational attainment levels. According to the survey, in 2011, 56.5 per cent of Roma and 24.5 per cent of Egyptians were illiterate. Only 25.3 per cent of Roma and 28.1 per cent of Egyptians had completed the first cycle of primary education (5 years) while 15.9% of Roma and 40.4% of Egyptians had completed 9 years of education. A very small percentage of Roma (2.2%) and Egyptians (7.1%) had completed secondary education or higher (Figure 17).

Table 5.
Level of education of Roma and Egyptians as compared to the majority population

Nr.	Category	Roma Population (8 years and above)	Egyptian Population (8 years and above)	Population of Albania (2001)**
1	Illiterate*	40.3	12.7	1,6
2	Literate (knows how to read and write)	41.2	38.4	14,8
3	Finished middle school	16.1	41.5	57,0
4	High school education	2.1	6.4	21,7
5	University education	0.3	0.9	4,9
6	Average years of education (males)	5.6	6.8	n/a
7	Average years of education (females)	5.3	6.9	n/a

Source: 2011 Roma and Egyptian Social Economic Survey; ****INSTAT**, Population of Albania, 2001

Note: *People who cannot read or write because they have never been to school

A comparison between the level of education of Roma and Egyptians and the majority population show that the gap between the two groups is very significant (Table 5). This lack of education makes it difficult for the Roma and Egyptian population to integrate in the labour market and may lead to a further decline in their skills, compared to the majority population.

9.1. Barriers to children’s education

Nearly 61% of Roma and 57% of Egyptian households say they face difficulties in the education of their



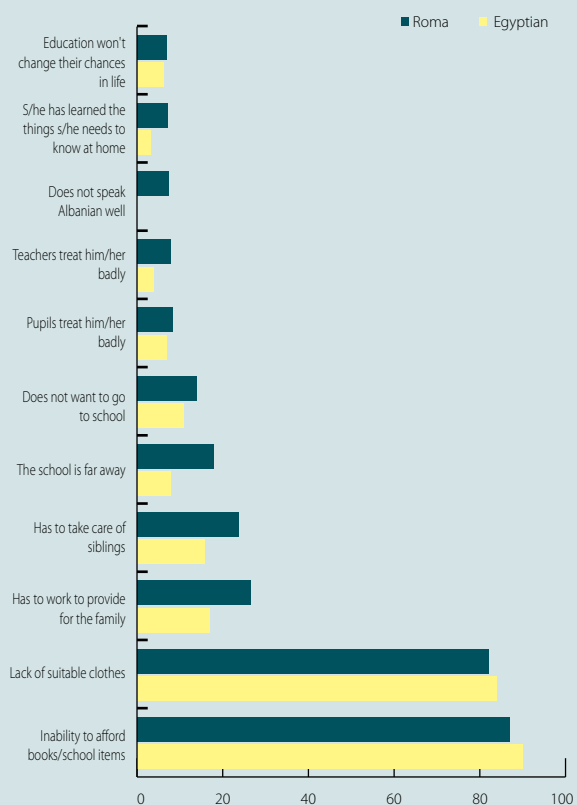
children. Roma and Egyptian parents list some causes which are mostly poverty-related. Among the main obstacles to their children's education are unaffordability of books and school items, lack of suitable clothing, poor living conditions and lack of infrastructure, the expectation that children must contribute to the family earnings and/or care for younger siblings, etc. (Figure 18). In addition, there are also institutional obstacles, as well as obstacles related to Roma traditions and culture.

9.2. Poverty-related barriers

There is a strong correlation between low levels of educational attainment and poverty. The survey found that 91% of children aged between 8 and 18 who do not attend school come from "very poor" families. According to their parents, there is an array of obstacles they face in educating their children.

Many parents (86% of Roma and 89% of Egyptian parents) mention the cost of books and other school items as one of the reasons preventing their

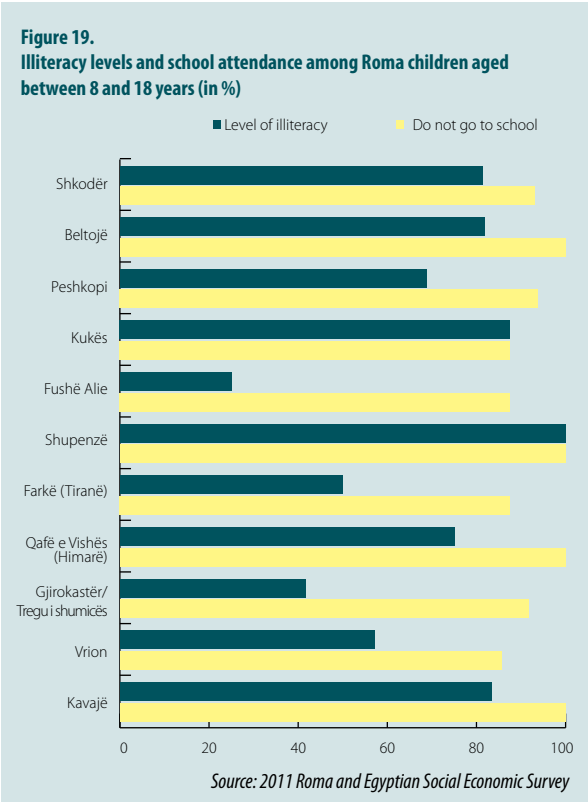
Figure 18.
Factors hindering Roma/Egyptian children from attending school



Source: 2011 Roma and Egyptian Social Economic Survey

children from attending school³⁶. Other parents (83% of Roma and 84% of Egyptians) say they cannot afford to buy suitable clothing for their children to go to school. In other cases, malnutrition and poor diet adversely affect their school results. Maria, a primary school teacher in Korça says: “Due to malnutrition, Egyptian children in particular find it difficult to concentrate and show signs of weakness and tiredness. They also have memory problems and often get sick”.

Because of their poverty, many Roma and Egyptian children attending school often feel inferior to their classmates from the majority population. In a group discussion held in Gjirokastra, a student from the majority said the following in one of the focus group discussions: “When we go out during the break, to buy something to eat, Roma girls stay behind in the classroom with the excuse that they want to do some reading. The real reason they stay apart from us is that they do not have any money to buy things...” All these factors push Roma and Egyptian children to abandon school.



36. In the 2011-2012 academic year, the Albanian government distributed textbooks to Roma pupils free of charge.

Some parents say that their children have to work to help their families (26.5 per cent of Roma and 16.9 per cent of Egyptians) or care for their younger siblings (23.6 per cent of Roma and 15.8 per cent of Egyptians). In certain cases children are the main earners in the family. Their families’ internal migration adversely affects the children’s education. The difficult living conditions of many Roma and Egyptian children – especially those living in campsites and tents – makes it difficult for them to attend school and do their homework (Figure 19).

BOX 6

Nimete, a Roma woman from Bregu i Lumit in Tirana, says the following about her son: “If he goes to school we will die of starvation because no one else can work. I am unemployed and so is my husband. My son works so we can eat. The boy is our eldest, he is 14 years old; the other children sometimes go to school and sometimes don’t. The school is there, but you have to be able to afford it. When you can’t, what can you do? (...) if we could afford it, the children would go to school”.

Arben, a Roma from Korça who migrated to Gjirokastra, states: “None of the children here, except the two brothers, go to school. How can we send them to school? We need proper conditions; first of all, we need water, of which there isn’t any here. (...) How can we wash the children? There is no water here, so we have to get it from the river. As for drinking water, the gentleman here allows us to fill some bottles and containers in the morning. Even our toilets are on the banks of the river, totally inadequate”.

Avni, a Roma migrant from Bilisht says: “This is the third year we have been coming here. We arrive around the 20th of March, stay until the end of July and then return home. (...) When we come here, we have to take the children out of school as they need to be fed. They want decent living conditions but we cannot afford them. We come here to work and to feed our children”.

Internal seasonal migration is another obstacle to children’s education. Some families migrate during the academic year. From April to September, families from Elbasan and Bilisht migrate to Shkozë near Durrës where they harvest reed and make wicker parasols, collect cans, etc. In these cases, the children leave the school before the end of the school year and many of them simply abandon it.

9.3. Institutional barriers

Institutional barriers to education include lack of capacities, quality of education offered, distance of settlements from schools, and elements of discrimination³⁷.

The Law on Education requires that every Albanian citizen shall attend the compulsory 9-year education; however, the law is not enforceable. Limited local government enforcement capacities coupled with the poverty of Roma and Egyptian families against whom financial penalties are to be imposed, are a barrier to law enforcement.

In some districts of the country – such as Kukës, Peshkopia, Milot, Shkodra, Saranda, etc., local authorities regard the Roma and Egyptians who have migrated to these areas in the recent years, as people who do not belong there and, therefore, are not entitled to local social services. This is because they are not registered with these local authorities. To address this issue, it is important to raise the awareness of central and local government authorities, especially in relation to the education and health of Roma and Egyptian children. New comprehensive policies which take into account the cultural and socio-economic profile of the Roma community need to be developed so that no barriers are placed before them and their way of life.

In many cases Roma and Egyptian parents complain about the low quality of education offered to their children, which discourages them from sending their children to school. The quality of education is particularly inadequate in the so-called “Roma/Egyptian classes or schools”, which are created because of the comparatively high number of Roma pupils attending them. For instance, over 98% of the pupils in the Naim Frashëri School in Korça are Roma and Egyptians. In Fushë-Kruja, the Migjeni School opened an additional campus near the Roma community settlement and, as a result, all the pupils there are

Roma. Speaking about the quality of education, Istref, a Roma from Fushë-Kruja, says: “It is not good. I have yet to see one pupil who knows how to write their name. Even those who are in fourth grade cannot write their own names. I don’t know why this is the case.” The concentration of Roma pupils in a school, class, or kindergarten clearly contains segregational elements and has been criticized by several not-for-profit organizations in Albania. Regional education authorities must keep this in mind and aim at desegregating these schools.

Distance from their home to school is another barrier to the children’s education, as reported by 18% of Roma parents and 8% of Egyptians. Some settlement such as in Levan, Drizë, Kthesa e Ariut etc., are quite a long way from the schools and the children must cross a busy carriageway or walk along it. A mother from Kthesa e Ariut expressed her concern: “The school is far away, in that direction. The children have to walk there and back. A couple of children got run over. For about two or three years I forbade my children from going to school, because I was afraid. Now that they have grown up a bit, I am allowing them to go”. About this problem, in the group discussions, many teachers said that a school minibus paid for by the local authorities would solve the problem of pupils commuting to school.

Discrimination is another obstacle to the children’s education. It is usually manifested in the form of vulgar behaviour and verbal insults and more rarely in the form of refusal to provide services. Nearly 8.4% of Roma and 7% of Egyptian parents say pupils from the Albanian majority treat their children badly. But there are also cases of indirect rejections. Reshit, a parent from Rrapishta near Elbasan, says, “My children used to go to another school, but they were refused enrolment, allegedly because they are full.” Some parents (7.9% of Roma and 3.9% of Egyptians) say that the behaviour of teachers towards their children is another obstacle. Fabiola, a pupil from the Albanian majority in a school in Korça, says, “Some Roma pupils...also feel uncomfortable because of the teachers. For example, in my class there are some pupils that the teacher pays a lot of attention to and

37. See, for instance, Sinani, Gj., and Taho, B., *Country Assessment Albania, Roma Education Fund, 2011.*

praises all the time, while the Roma are made to sit in one row at the end of the classroom.”

Consequently, all these barriers taken together dampen the children’s wish to go to school. This is also one of the reasons why some Roma parents (13.8%) and Egyptians (10.9%) say their children “do not want to go to school”.

9.4. Cultural barriers

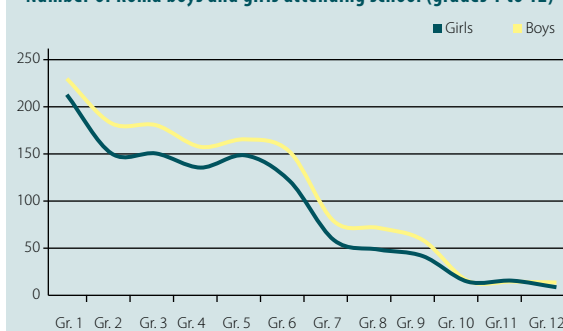
The cultural barriers are related to gender roles, language and nomadic traditions. In addition, there are other adverse factors, such as the parents’ low level of education and their unfavourable perceptions of the benefits of education for their children.

Marriage at a young age (often forced) is another factor that becomes a barrier to education, especially for Roma girls. Data from educational establishments in Albania show that the number of Roma girls enrolled in school begins to go down once they finish sixth grade. This is not as pronounced among boys (Figure 20). The phenomenon is related to some cultural norms (gender roles, early marriages, virginity tests) which exist among these communities and which have seen a comeback during the post-socialist transition, as a result of poverty and lack of security (De Soto *et al.*, 2005). Other parents take their girls out of school when they become 12 or 13 years old, to prevent them from socializing with boys. Not only do early marriages have adverse effects on their physical and psychological health (ERRC, 2011), but they are also a barrier to the girls’ further education and qualification, thus reducing their employment opportunities in the future. Early marriages affect both the present and future generations of children. It is a well-known fact that many young mothers are practically children themselves and do not have any knowledge about raising children (De Soto *et al.*, 2005). The illiteracy and inadequate education of children-mothers today will affect the education of their own children tomorrow.

The survey shows that 69.4 per cent of the Roma

speak Romani and Albanian at home. But in some large Roma communities – such as those in Levan, Rrapishta, NISH Tulla, Fushë Kruja, etc. – children speak Romani to communicate amongst themselves (18.3%). As the lessons in school are held in Albanian, many children find their first at school particularly challenging, to the point that they might even abandon studies. Nearly 8% of the parents mention language as an obstacle. In these cases, policy makers should take measures to include all children in preschool education, where they could be assisted by Roma teachers in learning the Albanian language.

Figure 20.
Number of Roma boys and girls attending school (grades 1 to 12)

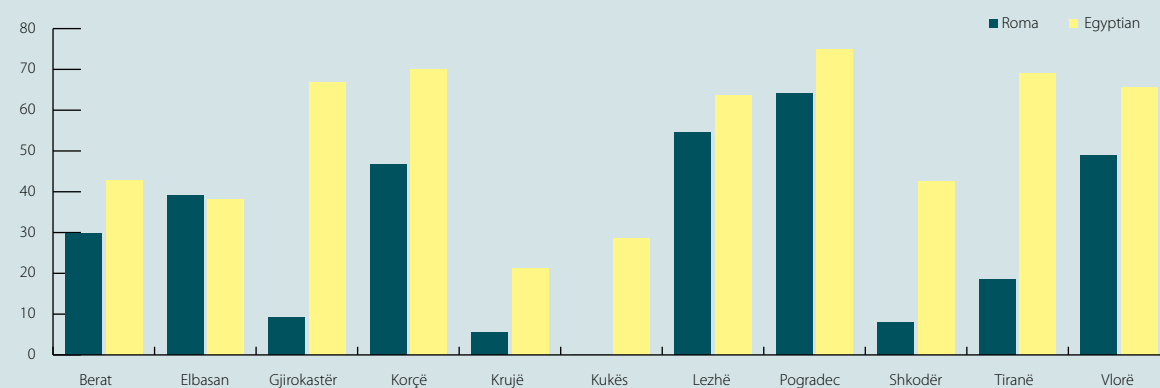


Source: 2011 Educational Establishments Survey

Nearly 7% of Roma and 6% of Egyptian parents believe that education will not increase their children’s future employment opportunities or improve their living conditions. With extreme poverty bearing down on them, many families are only interested in what they can get in the short term. Consequently, the long-term benefits of education are rather uncertain compared to the immediate benefits they derive from their children’s work. The same lack of motivation and low perception of the value of education are also seen among the interviewed pupils, who observe that their environment does not offer better chances to them. Thus, the motivation to strive towards higher educational attainment is very low both among parents and their children. A possible course of action in this case could be a familiarisation of Roma parents and children with cases of successful individuals from their community. University students³⁸, experts and

38. There are at least 20 Roma students and tens of Egyptian students attending the country’s universities.

Figure 21.
Kindergarten attendance by Roma and Egyptian children (in %)



Source: 2011 Roma and Egyptian Social Economic Survey

professionals from all areas, can serve as an example for the pupils and their parents by showing their achievements, education, employment and aspirations. Examples of individual success make an impression on the Roma.

BOX 7

Anila, an inspector of education in Gjirokastra points out: "I can see that they idolise people who are educated. They look up to those few who have completed their education (...) as their leaders. This means they love and appreciate school, they understand that educated people have values and their voice is heard...". These success stories should be publicised in the mass media.

Another barrier adversely affecting the education of Roma and Egyptian children is the low educational level of their parents. Many parents, due to their low level of education, are not able to help their children with their homework. To address this situation, Save the Children is implementing a project³⁹ in some schools in Gjirokastra and Korça. The project aims to help pupils with their after-school study and homework, held in the school environment with the assistance of qualified teachers. This experience must be extended to other schools in the country, especially where there the poorer Roma and Egyptians live.

9.5. Importance of preschool education

Empirical data show that 37% of Roma and 44.4% of Egyptian children aged between 3 and 6 go to kindergarten (Figure 21). This percentage is higher in the districts of Delvina, Pogradec, Lezha and Korça, while in other districts, such as Kukës, Peshkopia, Shkodra, Kavaja, and Kruja preschool education for Roma children is almost inexistent. However, preschool education has a crucial role in the education of Roma and Egyptian children.

Children who attend kindergarten are better able to adapt to the school environment when they go to primary school, and they have less difficulty in learning. In Gjirokastra and Korça almost all the children who attend the kindergarten enrol in first grade. Preschool education is also an important link to properly learning the Albanian language.

However, in some villages or settlements there are no kindergartens, or they are far from Roma and Egyptian homes (Beltojë/Shkodra, Peshkopia, Fushë Ali/Peshkopia, Kukës, Vriion/Saranda, Qafë e Vishës/Himarë, Ura e Farkës, Terovë/Korça, Kavaja, Gjirokastrë/Tregu i Shumicës). Luljeta, a mother from Rrapishta in Elbasan complains; "There is no kindergarten. There is one in the town centre but it's not worth to carry my child in my arms for an hour on the way there, and then go back to collect him three hours later." The inclusion of all children in the preschool system, which should be compulsory for all families, must be one of the priorities of education policies.

39. Save the Children, *Inclusive Quality Pre-Primary and Primary Education for Roma/Egyptian Children*.

9.6. Conclusions and Recommendations

Policy recommendations in this area can be summarized as follows:

Due to their poverty, many Roma and Egyptian pupils lack the necessary conditions at home to do their homework and other school-related tasks. Moreover, the low educational level of their parents leaves them without the necessary support in doing their homework that their peers from the majority population get. Others are obliged to work to help support their families. Therefore, in the schools where Roma and Egyptian pupils attend, special programs must be launched so that pupils (of all ethnic groups) can study after class, in the school premises, with the help of qualified and dedicated teachers. In addition, students from teaching colleges could be involved in helping groups of pupils. Better conditions and qualified assistance would help Roma and Egyptian children and those from the majority population to overcome their difficulties and achieve better results at school. This experience already exists in some Decade of Roma countries (Hungary, Bulgaria, etc.). Textbooks and other school items must be provided to Roma and Egyptian pupils free of charge. Although this practice already started in the 2011-2012 academic year, it needs to be further extended in the future. The provision of free food would also be a welcome new measure, starting with the poor Roma and Egyptian communities. In addition, in those villages or peri-urban areas where Roma and Egyptian settlements are far from schools, the pupils must be guaranteed free transport to and from school. Strengthening the cultural identity of Roma and Egyptian pupils is one area that needs further attention, as it would help achieve a better integration of Roma and Egyptian pupils. To this end, extracurricular activities led by trained teachers can include talks on the history, culture and traditions of the Roma and Egyptians in Albania. In addition, history, geography and literature textbooks must mention Roma and Egyptians. This would promote respect for diversity and raise the awareness of pupils from various ethnic groups of everyone else's cultural background. In addition, strengthening the cultural identity of the Roma and Egyptian pupils would make

the school environment much friendlier to them. Projects to this effect have already started in some schools of Korça and Gjirokastra, but the experience needs to be further extended to other schools and communities.

The development of curricula and training of teachers in the areas of Roma and Egyptian history and culture, initially in the schools where there are Roma/Egyptian pupils, is a necessity⁴⁰. In the short term, this can be realised through intensive training courses led by experts, while in the medium and long term, the solution can be found in the introduction of new course programmes and subjects in teacher-training colleges.

According to quantitative and qualitative data collected from parents and pupils, some school teachers do not treat Roma and Egyptian pupils in the same way as they treat pupils from the majority population. Consequently, educational policies must aim to train and prepare teachers to work with multi-cultural classes, be familiar with the cultural values of other ethnic groups and the needs of marginalised groups, and be able to treat all pupils equally.

In the present conditions, for many Roma Egyptian parents the long-term benefits of education are still intangible, compared to the immediate benefits they gain from taking children out of school and making them work in the informal sector. This low perception of long-term benefits, due to the few opportunities for getting employment in the public sector and the formal private sector, affects and demotivates Roma and Egyptian about their educational achievements. One of the possible courses of action in this regard would be raising the awareness of both pupils and their parents and familiarising them with success stories of individuals from both these communities. By talking about their achievements, education, employment and aspirations, Roma and Egyptian university students, experts, and other professionals from the public and private sector may serve as

40. The Institute of Pedagogical Research is preparing a manual for the training of teachers who will be working with Roma and Egyptian pupils.

examples that these pupils and parents might want to emulate.

Talented Roma and Egyptian pupils from poor families can be supported with specially adapted scholarships to be able continue their secondary and university studies⁴¹. These scholarships, which must be administered and monitored by public institutions, would motivate talented and successful pupils and students (starting from the upper grades of primary education) and would help support them in the conditions of social and economic hardships.

In addition, university scholarships by public institutions in collaboration with international organisations⁴², would have a great impact on the creation of the Roma and Egyptian elites. Some of these scholarships may go to students of Education, Medicine, etc., where the needs of the Roma and Egyptian communities are the greatest.

Pre-school education must be expanded further and aim to include all Roma and Egyptian children free of charge, preferably in kindergartens serving meals. The children attending these kindergartens may learn the Albanian language from dedicated Roma teachers. In certain settlements (such as in Shkodër, Kukës, Peshkopi, Shupenzë, Milot, Gjirokastër, etc.) these institutions must take into account the difficult living conditions of Roma/Egyptian children and have the necessary infrastructure in place.

During the socialist period, segregation of Roma and Egyptians in separate classes or “special” schools was not a feature of the Albanian education system like in many Eastern and Central European countries. This phenomenon appeared in some schools and kindergartens in the post-socialist transition period. Educational authorities must contribute to raising the awareness of schools about the long-term negative consequences of segregation. Their educational policies must address this phenomenon to prevent

it from becoming a stable feature. A number of the successful desegregation experiences, implemented by some Decade of the Roma countries, may also be applied in the schools where the phenomenon has been identified.

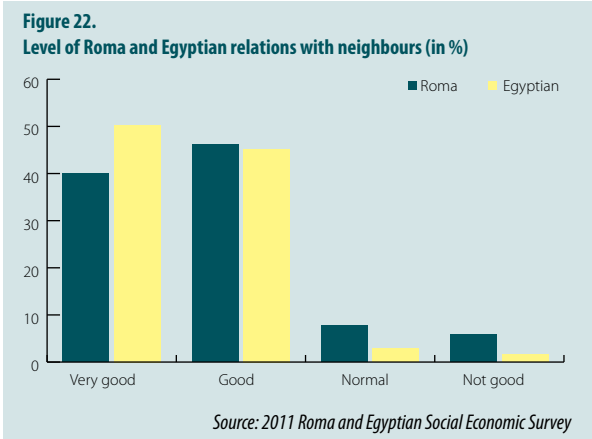
41. According to data collected by the Amaro Drom association, during the 2008-2009 academic year, only 42 Roma pupils attended high school and about 15 to 17 others attended university (Amaro Drom, Zëri Rrom, Buletini V, October-December 2008).

42. Between 2008 and 2011, the Roma Education Fund (REF) granted 68 scholarships, or 69,500 Euro in total, to Roma and Egyptian students, to pursue their studies in public and private universities of the country.

IX. The Social Capital of Roma and Egyptians

During the post-socialist transition, the Roma and Egyptians developed new forms of social capital, in order to cope with poverty and social exclusion. The two forms of social capital are the *cognitive*⁴³ and *structural*⁴⁴ social capital.

The Roma and Egyptians are rich in cognitive social capital, which helps them cope with poverty and social exclusion. The two key elements of cognitive social capital are trust and solidarity. According to the survey, nearly 86.3% of Roma and 95.5% of Egyptians who have migrated in the past ten years – say their relations with the neighbours are ‘very good’ or ‘good’ (Figure 22). These relations are based on mutual trust which allows them to lend each-other small amounts of money. Nearly 33% of Roma and 31% of Egyptians say they are able to borrow from people outside their family circle⁴⁵. An additional element of trust is buying on credit, known as ‘list buying’, from grocery shops⁴⁶, a system which functions on the basis of the trust between shopkeepers and customers. Nearly 80% of Roma and 81% of Egyptians report they do ‘list buying’ in one or several food shops⁴⁷. Internal and international migration is another process which relies, almost entirely, on cognitive social capital. Suffice it to mention the importance of information and assistance with finding housing and employment in the host country, or the remittances sent home. For instance, nearly 11% of Roma and 12% of Egyptian migrants send their remittances via acquaintances.



The solidarity between Roma and Egyptians is expressed in the collaboration and assistance they give each-other in times of need. The solidarity with the majority population is seen especially in those towns and villages where the Roma and Egyptians are more integrated. This solidarity and inter-ethnic trust is beneficial to all. For instance, the higher levels of Roma migration to some villages in Central Albania is also explained by the close links, solidarity and relations of trust forged over decades with ethnic Albanians. In some other areas, where Roma and Egyptians live in residential segregation (Fushë Kruja, Shkodra, Kthesa e Ariut, NISH Tulla, Fshati Rom, Shkoza, Rrapishta, etc.), the level of solidarity is low. The Roma, unlike the Egyptians, have benefitted from a network of trans-national solidarity with Roma from neighbouring countries, with whom they share the same language. In the early 1990s, Greek Roma came to the aid of many Roma from Albania, by helping them to find jobs and shelter in Greece (Mavrommatis, 2004; Soros Foundation, 2012).

The Roma and Egyptians are rich in cognitive social capital but not equally so in structural social capital. This form of capital is essential to help Roma and Egyptians express their needs and protect their interests, as well as to promote their participation in the political processes at the local, regional and national level.

Structural social capital involves associations and networks that facilitate collective action. According to the survey 20.5% of Roma and 4% of Egyptians reported to be part of cultural, educational, etc.,

43. Cognitive social capital refers to the norms, values and attitudes that govern behaviour.

44. Structural social capital refers to the associations and formal and informal networks that facilitate collective action.

45. Many respondents say that the number of people (outside their family circle) from whom they can borrow money is higher; however, the number becomes lower because of their poverty.

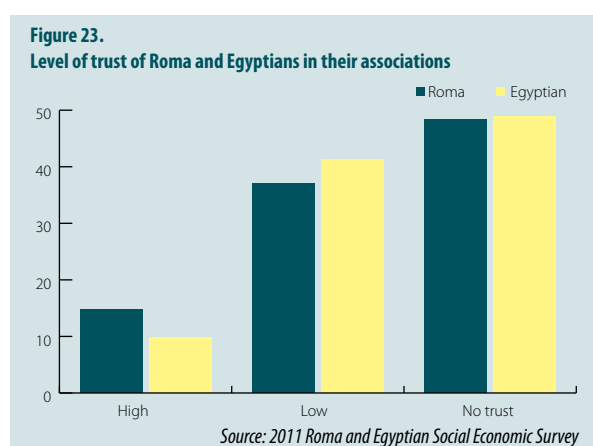
46. Buying on informal credit, with zero interest.

47. Poor ethnic Albanian families also buy on credit. However, the percentage of Roma and Egyptian families who buy their groceries on credit is much higher than that of the majority population. According to a 2012 study by the Bank of Albania, nearly 45,000 families, or about 5% of the total number Albanian households, buy their groceries on credit. In addition, a comparison with the study by De Soto et al. (2005), reveals that the percentage of Roma/Egyptian families who buy on credit has increased significantly. Thus, for instance, in 2003, 65% of Roma and 52% of Egyptian families bought groceries on credit, while in 2011 the percentage had risen to 80%.

associations. The Roma mentioned about 12-15 associations which they are part of, while the Egyptians have about four or five such associations⁴⁸. In addition, about 27% of Roma and 12% of Egyptians say they would like to join one.

Many associations are fragmented and local in character, or they are group or clan-based, along the lines of various Roma clans. Their human capacities and financial resources are limited. In the recent years, some Roma and fewer Egyptian associations have started to collaborate with each other and launched joint initiatives. Although they have a lot of things in common, Roma and Egyptian associations still do not collaborate enough with each other.

However, about 48% of Roma and Egyptians say that they have “no trust” in their associations (Figure 23). According to the interviews, many Roma and Egyptians think that the associations do not uphold or protect the interests of the Roma and Egyptian communities effectively.



Another aspect of social capital is the participation of Roma and Egyptians in joint activities and events to the benefit of their communities. However, the level of participation in these associations at the present

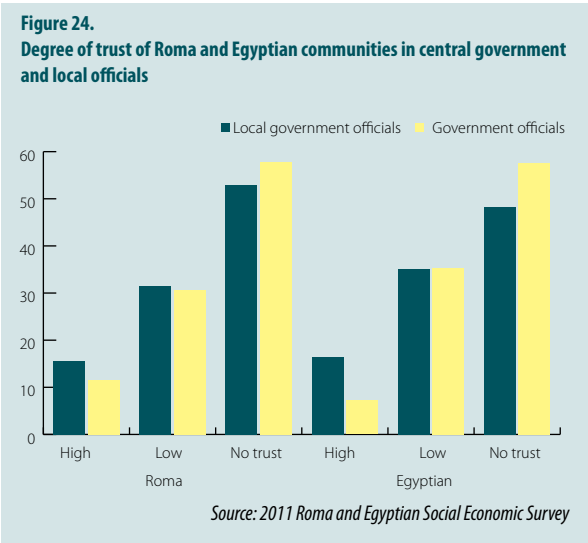
time is low. The survey data show that only 22.3% of Roma and 4.5% of Egyptians say they participated in these events to the benefit of their communities. Participation is higher in some villages near Berat, Fier, Lushnja and Vlorë, where Roma NGOs have been able to mobilise the population in voluntary action for the improvement of infrastructure (sewage, potable water, etc.)

Nearly 53% of Roma and 48% of Egyptians say they do not trust local government officials. This opinion mirrors their direct experiences with leaders and local government officials in the past year. According to the survey 39% of Roma and 32% of Egyptians needed to approach local government representatives and officials, mainly on issues such as housing, employment, economic assistance, various personal documentation and certificates, infrastructure improvements, conflict resolution, etc..

Many Roma and Egyptians say they are informed about government policies and measures on employment, education, health, infrastructure, etc. They receive the information mostly from the TV, friends and relatives, radio, and government representatives. Numerous Roma (83%) and Egyptians (88%) say they vote in the country's general and local elections. However, in the interviews many reported that their participation in elections has not translated to better living conditions. As a result about 57% of Roma and Egyptians say they do not trust government officials “at all” (Figure 24).

In spite of their high turnout in general and local elections, the level of political representation of Roma and Egyptians at the national and local levels is very low. Very few Roma and Egyptians work in the public administration and, according to the interviews, only a handful are elected in municipal and communal councils throughout the country (Elbasan, Korçë, Grabian and Savër near Lushnja, Levan near Fier, etc.). As a result they are not able to make representations and lobby for the protection of the rights of their communities.

48. Associations mentioned by the Roma include *Amaro Drom*, *Romani Baxt*, *Disutni Albania*, *Romët e Veriut* (Roma of the North), *Romani Sezi*, *Alb Rom*, *Amaro Dives*, *Roma për Integrim* (Roma for Integration), *Roma Active Albania*, *Gruaja Rome* (Roma Women), etc. The Egyptians mentioned *Nefreta*, *Unioni Egjiptianët e Shqipërisë* (Union of Albanian Egyptians), *Sfinksi* (The Sphinx), *Kabaja*, etc.



These groups can represent the interests of their communities at the local level. In addition, they may participate in municipal and communal meetings and express and protect the interests of their own communities.

In many towns and villages the Roma and Egyptians – either separately or together - can elect one or more councillors to their municipal or communal councils. These councillors must be able to lobby and protect the interests of their communities.

Conclusions and recommendations

Roma and Egyptians use social capital to cope with poverty and social exclusion. The data show that they are rich in cognitive social capital, but lack in structural social capital, such as associations and networks that promote collective action. The strengthening of this capital would empower Roma and Egyptian communities to express their needs and interests, as well as to participate in the decision-making processes on the local and national level.

The government and international organisations must promote the participation of Roma and Egyptians in joint action to the benefit of their communities.

The government and international organisations should promote projects that strengthen cooperation between Roma and Egyptians, so that they can form one united front for the protection of their interests. In addition, they must help strengthen the capacities of Roma and Egyptian NGOs through various projects and training courses. Another option would be the strengthening of relations between these associations and analogous organisations in Eastern and Central European countries, whose experiences may be beneficial.

Another course of action would be the assistance that the government and international organisations can provide in setting up and strengthening interest groups from the Roma and Egyptian communities.

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