

# REGIONAL BRIEF

[UNDP and Roma inclusion]



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## THE ROOTS OF POVERTY AMONG THE ROMA

Roma are among the most deprived peoples in Europe. Many of the 10–12 million Roma who live in Europe still live in a state of poverty. Around 80 percent of those living in EU countries earn less than is necessary to meet their most basic needs. Two thirds of young people – a majority of them women – are unemployed or out of school, while 46 percent do not have access to toilets. Nearly half of young Roma women aged 15–19 years are married or in a union. Discrimination and prejudice are important drivers of Roma exclusion and need to be tackled systematically.

### Why UNDP has a role in Roma inclusion

Roma poverty, which involves multiple deprivations, requires a comprehensive human development response, involving both Roma and other communities. Expanding people's choices and opportunities to live a life they value is the sustainable foundation of any Roma-targeted intervention.

UNDP is equally trusted by governments, international organization, and the Roma civil society, making it an ideal partner to achieve change in the lives of the Roma population and their neighbours.

### What are we doing?

There are three dimensions to UNDP's work on Roma inclusion:

- The generation of comprehensive, comparable regional data on the status of Roma exclusion and data-driven policy research;
- Operational support to national, local, and sectoral institutions focusing on Roma Inclusion; and
- Designing and implementing local development initiatives to benefit Roma communities.

UNDP's regional and national presence means that it can apply concepts consistently across different countries, yet tailor specific approaches to the local context.

### Comprehensive socio-economic data on the status of Roma exclusion

Reliable data and solid analysis are prerequisites for assessing Roma access to human rights and basic services, and for informing policies designed to improve access. UNDP has more than 15 years of experience in data collection about the situation of Roma.

The [Roma Inclusion Working Papers](#) series, based on the regional (multi-country) 2011 survey data, culminated with the design and application of a [multidimensional poverty index \(MPI\)](#)—an innovative approach to conceptualising and analysing the situation of Roma. UNDP also produced country reports on [FYR Macedonia \(employment\)](#); [Albania \(Roma and Egyptians | community services\)](#); and [Serbia \(Roma relations with other ethnic communities\)](#).

This work is done in close cooperation with other institutions, such as the Roma Integration 2020 team of the Regional Cooperation Council, the World Bank, and the EU's Fundamental Rights Agency.

### Operational support to institutions focusing on Roma Inclusion

The recently completed [Regional Facility for Roma Inclusion](#) in the Western Balkans helped carry out national Roma integration strategies. Capacity development trainings for inter-ministerial bodies in charge of implementing Roma inclusion strategies were conducted in Western Balkan countries, focusing on Montenegro, BiH, Albania, and Serbia.

UNDP helped Roma in Montenegrin municipalities to obtain personal documentation, facilitating their access to social welfare, employment, and health insurance. In Albania, we supported local authorities to inventory the needs of Roma and Egyptian populations, while in Bosnia and Herzegovina, UNDP is involving the Roma into [local decision-making](#).

UNDP in FYR Macedonia and in Kosovo<sup>1</sup> are supporting national and local structures to meet the targets on employment of Roma. The aim of the [FYR Macedonia programme](#) is to support candidates to start their own businesses or to encourage them to make better use of existing active labour market measures. What started as a pilot under UNDP programming became part of the National Employment Programme in 2015.

### Local development initiatives

Roma exclusion stems not just from a lack of financial resources, unemployment, sub-standard housing, or poor access to social services. It is a combination of all these factors. It is further reinforced by prejudice and discrimination, specific behaviors, limited opportunities for political participation, limited access to justice, and segregation. As a result, Roma exclusion should be addressed in all of its multiple dimensions.

In applying this approach, UNDP selects the most disadvantaged areas of a country (defined using a range of socio-economic indicators), and covers everyone in these areas. In practice, these areas are those with high concentrations of Roma populations.

In FYR Macedonia, UNDP supported the establishment of 12 [Roma Information Centres](#) (RICs) in municipalities with the highest percentage of Roma inhabitants. RICs are in constant communication with the Roma population to provide information, advice, and referrals to relevant institutions. The RICs facilitate access to social protection services, employment, health, housing, education, and legal documentation.

<sup>1</sup>References to Kosovo on this text shall be understood to be in the context of the UN Security Council Resolution 1244 (1999)

The “Human Security for Vulnerable Groups” project, implemented by the UN Kosovo team, helps the most vulnerable groups (including Roma) to identify activities that will decrease the human security risks they face. The project has worked on improving living conditions and promoting a tolerant, multi-ethnic environment, resulting in more self-reliance and participation, improved housing, and sustainable livelihoods.

In Serbia, UNDP supported dialogue between local authorities and local Roma civil society organizations through the establishment of municipal Roma Coordinators. Started in 2006, there is now a network of around 50 Roma Coordinators across Serbia who recently established an Association to address Roma inclusion issues at the local level in a more systematic manner. They are now formally integrated into local government structures.

UNDP's [“Reintegration of Roma Returnees in Serbia”](#) project is currently providing better access to employment, education, and housing for Roma who were denied asylum in the EU. Four out of five registered returnees under the readmission agreement are Roma. Local governments' capacity for dealing with readmission of this scale are limited, and new models for sustainable reintegration are needed.

### Ways forward

By using empirical evidence and the project expertise of its country offices, the Istanbul Regional Hub is working on the long-term results of Roma inclusion by

- The 2017 regional Roma survey;
- Adapting the Sustainable Development Goals (using Roma survey data to define relevant national baseline and targets) to align Roma inclusion with broader sustainable development agendas;
- Strengthening local development programming, with a greater focus on Roma inclusion;
- Expanding Roma inclusion programming from the Western Balkans to Turkey and to European Neighbourhood Policy countries (initially Moldova and Ukraine).

