

UNDEF



The United Nations
Democracy Fund

**PROVISION FOR POST PROJECT EVALUATIONS FOR THE UNITED NATIONS
DEMOCRACY FUND
Contract NO.PD:C0110/10**

EVALUATION REPORT



TRANSTEC
PROJECT
MANAGEMENT

**UDF-MAC- 07-196 - Gender Equality and Equity – Follow Up to CEDAW
and Romani Women**

Date: 19 August 2011

Acknowledgements

The Evaluation team wishes to express its appreciation to the management and staff of the Roma Centre of Skopje (RCS) for their strong support in facilitating the evaluation, assisting in the arrangement of meetings, and in providing their own frank and open assessment of the project and its various components. In addition, the Evaluators wish to thank the following organizations and individuals for their cooperation with the assessment process, and for their valuable input:

- The UN Resident Coordinator and the Assistant Resident Representative, UNDP;
- Representatives of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, Government of the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM);
- The representatives of the Gender Commissions of the Municipalities of Bitola and Prilep, and the RCS Liaison Officer in Bitola;
- the staff of Roma SOS in Prilep, ZAR in Gostivar, Ambrela in Skopje and KHAM in Kumanovo, as well as with the National Roma Centre, NRC, also in Kumanovo;
- Trainers involved with the Youth Leadership and NGO Capacity Development components; and,
- Youth Training participants in Prilep, Gostivar and Kumanovo;

The Evaluators also wish to express their thanks to SOS Roma and KHAM for permitting the use of photographs taken during project activities in this report.

Disclaimer

The views expressed in this report are those of the evaluators. They do not represent those of UNDEF, or of any of those referred to in the report.

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Table of Contents

- I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY..... 1**
- II. INTRODUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT 5**
 - (i) Project and evaluation objectives 5
 - (ii) Evaluation Methodology 5
 - (iii) Development Context 5
- III. PROJECT STRATEGY 9**
 - (i) Logical Framework 9
 - (ii) Project approach 10
 - (iii) Strategic aspects 12
- IV. EVALUATION FINDINGS..... 13**
 - (i) Relevance 13
 - (ii) Effectiveness 14
 - (iii) Efficiency 16
 - (iv) Impact 16
 - (v) Sustainability 21
 - (vi) UNDEF value added..... 21
- V. CONCLUSIONS..... 22**
- VI. RECOMMENDATIONS..... 24**
- VII. OVERALL ASSESSMENT AND CLOSING THOUGHTS 25**

- VIII ANNEXES..... 26**
- ANNEX 1: EVALUATION QUESTIONS..... 26**
- ANNEX 2: DOCUMENTS REVIEWED 27**
- ANNEX 3: PERSONS INTERVIEWED 28**
- ANNEX 4: LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS 29**

I. Executive Summary

(i) Project presentation

This report is the evaluation of the project entitled “Gender Equality and Equity – Follow Up to CEDAW and Romani Women” implemented by the Roma Centre of Skopje (RCS) from October 1, 2008 to November 30, 2010 (Including a one-month extension) in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM). The project had a total expended budget of US\$74,957.

As a precursor to the comments which follow, it should be borne in mind that the UNDEF grant was relatively small (US\$81,000). The grantee accomplished a great deal with the funds provided. Any critical comments on project components in this report must be qualified by an appreciation for the larger picture.

The project built on the strategic plan that RCS had developed for 2008-2010, and its earlier project “Implementation of CEDAW for Romani Women”, as well as follow-up initiatives (2005-2008). All project components were designed to address issues deriving from the research conducted through the previous project. There were six principal elements of the project:

- Capacity development support to Roma women’s NGOs;
- Building the capacity of young Roma women activists (a. through training of young women to play a leading role in the capacity development of women’s NGOs, and b. through training young women to act as researchers at community level in providing data, based on individual interviews for the database on Romani women);
- Establishing/updating and extending a database on Romani women and their situation
- Cooperation with local government on local initiatives on gender equality and Roma women;
- Cooperation with Roma political parties in engendering party programs; and.
- Youth empowerment through a leadership training program, which also sensitized young people on gender equality and racial/ethnic and gender discrimination.

As background, it should be noted that, according to the last census, 2.66 % or 53,879 of the 2,022,547 citizens FYROM were Roma. However there are unofficial figures that put the Roma population at 135,490. Romani women face both gender-based and racial discrimination. They experience discrimination in access to education, health care and employment. In addition, they must cope with major problems of domestic violence.

(ii) Findings

▪ **Relevance:** The project addressed a number of critical issues in the sphere of human rights and democratic participation, central to UNDEF’s mandate. The audiences addressed were all relevant to efforts to improve the condition of the Roma of FYROM, and particularly Roma women. By focusing on Roma youth and young activists, particularly, though not exclusively, young women, it sought to address in a practical way the weakness of Roma civil society organizations, and particularly those led by, and working for, Roma women, in undertaking advocacy on behalf of their own people. Roma women’s organizations are mainly small, local in focus, and lacking regular funding, facilities and paid staff. Further, there have been few opportunities for Roma NGO representatives to benefit from systematic training on rights issues of urgent concern to their communities or to acquire

practical skills to support social change. In this respect, the project was seeking to make a contribution to filling an important set of needs.

- **Effectiveness:** None of the components of the project was large in budgetary terms or scope, but most were complex and demanding in the management attention they required for coordination, communications, contracting, logistics and trouble-shooting. It is probably the case that RCS had underestimated what would be required of it in dealing with so many different sets of activities simultaneously. For all that, the staff coped very well with the pressure of work and managed to get things done. All project components, with the exception of engendering of the Roma political parties, were well-received by partners and beneficiaries. The training curricula and methodologies for delivering the training were very effective in the case of both the youth empowerment initiative and the preparation of young women activists to undertake field research on the situation of Roma women in local communities. RCS may have discovered a niche for itself in training young people as a means to supporting their engagement with the public realm. So much more is to be done and it is to be hoped that, in the future, it will attempt to develop, and seek financial support, for a longer-term approach, through which it continues to work with young trainees, both directly and in partnership with other like-minded NGOs.

- **Efficiency:** RCS is a modest organization in every way. It manages funds with extreme care, and it worked extremely hard to ensure that all aspects of the project were managed in a cost-effective way. Throughout the project, the grantee maintained firm control over costs and ensured that funds were used as intended. All contracts for training and facilitation were put up for competitive bidding. Similarly, all trainees were selected through a competitive process. The plans for activities under the municipal government cooperation component, along with budgets, including matching funds from the municipal governments, had to be approved by RCS. This certainly led to keeping costs down, and the project ended with some unspent funds, as a result of savings on travel expenditures. At the same time, it may be argued that most project components were short of funds. All delivered the planned outputs, so commitments were lived up to. Yet all components of the project ended abruptly when they seemed to call for further work or follow-up. A more results-focused approach to budgeting might have brought about a change in the pattern of allocation of funds and the dropping of some components in favor of optimizing impact.

- **Impact:** The capacity development support program offered to three NGOs was worthwhile, but too short-term in its duration. It did make a difference for all three organizations supported. Within the limitations of time and resources available for the planned activities, it was imaginative and effective. In two of its components, the project was fighting an uphill battle to get the attention of potential partners. The first component concerned Roma political parties, and, the second, municipal government and cooperation with the Equality Commissions (committees) of the municipal councils. In both cases, results were disappointing. While it was worthwhile to make the effort to engage with these partners, whose role, in each case, is of some importance for Roma women and recognition of their needs, it is apparent that further investment in initiatives of this kind would be inadvisable under current conditions.

The difficulties encountered in lack of interest in the initiative to strengthen attention to gender equality in the programs of Roma political parties highlight the absence of effective political representation of Roma and their interests in a “patron-client” political system, where parties do a poor job of representing the priorities of their constituencies, or of responding to their concerns. The parties saw no benefits in opening themselves to cooperation with an NGO which they did not trust. As to municipal government, there seems to be little interest on the part of local government units in committing resources to Roma issues, and Roma tend to be invisible in local decision-making. The work supported by the project in two of the

three municipalities was useful, but had no impact in changing the disposition of local government towards Roma and Roma women's organizations.

As noted above in the list of project components, there were two separate initiatives to support young Roma women activists. The first involved training educated young women from Roma communities to undertake field research on the socio-economic conditions of Roma women across the age range in local communities, using training methods which RCS had employed before. This initiative was effective both in terms of the training and the value and relevance of the data collected through the research. The new data will be used in compilation of the next Shadow CEDAW Report for FYROM, to be submitted to the UN CEDAW Committee, due later this year. In the second case, the focus was on young women known to local NGOs who would be trained to become team members in the planning and delivery of capacity development support to the 3 NGOs, as considered above. In the first case, concerning field research, the initiative unfolded according to plan. In the second, the effort to find young women activists to play a role in the capacity development component succeeded in finding only one individual capable of playing the expected role. This was a major disappointment. In part, the difference in the results achieved in the two initiatives would seem to derive from the more rigorous selection methods, and the higher educational levels of the applicants selected for training, in the first case.

- **Sustainability:** The grantee used the funding from this project to take forward its agenda on several fronts. For all in initiatives supported, there will be a need for further funding, if the journey is to continue. Given the limited funds available to support activities with Roma women's NGOs, or for engagement with the democratic process by Roma women or youth, every project is a beginning, and nothing is completed. A project of this kind is valuable in simply keeping things going. Yet, without a change in the broader context, little will be sustainable in the way the term is normally understood. All actors engaged in the project are positive about the experience and keen to do more, but all need additional funds for substantial further developments to take place.

- **UNDEF and Added Value:** The project was a clear fit with the UNDEF priorities of democratic inclusion and support for engagement of minority groups with the political process. The systematic exclusion of the Roma from access to public services and economic opportunities, brought about by a combination of deliberate state action, neglect and widespread prejudice, is quite apparent in FYROM, even though the situation may not be as bad as in some of the surrounding countries. RCS is working in areas where there is little alternative funding available. The UNDEF funding enabled it to expand its programming and to offer some support to other organizations which form part of its network, while also taking forward other important ideas intended to strengthen the engagement of Roma with the public realm. The focus on Roma women and youth is particularly valuable. UNDEF support has been important to RCS in reinforcing its credibility with domestic partners and with OSI in Budapest, its principal source of support. Activities under the project, and the UNDEF flag, have also reinforced its visibility with UN agencies

(iii)Conclusions

The project strategy was for RCS to do as much as possible with limited funds in moving the organization's agenda forward. All activities supported were relevant and worthwhile. Through an extremely careful allocation of funds to different areas of activity, the organization was able to undertake a long list of activities and, thus, achieve its own objective. Yet, from an external perspective, it is apparent that there were insufficient funds for some activities, where follow-up was badly needed. Given the difficulties in finding alternative funds, the grantee tried to do too much through the project, for entirely understandable reasons. By supporting RCS in the project, UNDEF was providing resources to an under-funded area and supporting the effort to facilitate the democratic inclusion of a

highly-marginalized minority group. The particular attention to Roma women was important, since this is a group whose interests are particularly poorly-served by public programs, and which often lacks voice in its own community. Projects of this kind deserve the attention of UNDEF, since they tend not to fit with the priorities of most other donor organizations.

(iv) Recommendations

- It is recommended that in future funding proposals RCS give more attention to ensuring the full budgeting of project components, to allow for longer-term engagement with partners and beneficiaries.

- There was a lack of continuity and follow-up in some areas of project work. This suggests that the project tried to include too many elements within a single project with limited resources. In the future, it is recommended that RCS be prepared to make some difficult choices in determining priorities, in order to ensure that adequate resources (including management time) are assigned to all project resources.

- The effort by RCS to train young women to play an active role in supporting project activities was an important one, if not always successful. It is recommended that RCS examine the lessons of its experience to date and refine its approach, while continuing with this valuable work. It is also recommended that thought be given to ways of maintaining contact with all the young women who were involved as trainees, including those who were less successful in the training.

- It is essential that RCS finds ways to stay in contact with young people with whom it has worked. They are a precious asset. Hence, it is recommended that RCS consider how best it can provide further support to trainees who have participated in its various short-term training programs, such as those supported in this project. One modest step forward, which is recommended here, would be the establishment of an internet-based youth network. This would facilitate communication among young people who have been involved in training programs, allow RCS and others to post notices and share news, while also providing a forum in which ideas for new initiatives can be put forward and explored.

- It is recommended that UNDEF consider projects which support the democratic inclusion of Roma in public life in FYROM and elsewhere in Central and SE Europe as a high priority. Projects focusing on Roma women and Roma youth deserve particular attention.

- Should UNDEF reconsider its policy of not renewing funding for grantees, RCS would be a worthy recipient of a further grant.

II. Introduction and Development Context

(i) Project and evaluation objectives

This report is the evaluation of the project entitled “Gender Equality and Equity – Follow Up to CEDAW and Romani Women” implemented by the Roma Centre of Skopje (RCS) from October 1, 2008 to November 30, 2010 (including a one-month extension) in FYROM. The project had a total expended budget of US\$74,957. UNDEF and Transtec have agreed on a framework governing the evaluation process, set out in the Operational Manual. According to the manual, the objective of the evaluation is to “undertake in-depth analysis of UNDEF-funded projects to gain a better understanding of what constitutes a successful project which will in turn help UNDEF devise future project strategies. Evaluations also assist stakeholders to determine whether projects have been implemented in accordance with the project document and whether anticipated project outputs have been achieved.”

(ii) Evaluation Methodology

The evaluation was conducted by two experts, one international and one national, under the terms of a framework agreement between UNDEF and Transtec. The methodology of the evaluation is set out in the Operational Manual governing this framework agreement, as well as in the evaluation Launch Note. A set of project documents was provided to the evaluators in the weeks preceding the field mission. On that basis, they prepared the Launch Note (UDF-MAC-07-196) setting out key issues and particular areas of focus, to be considered during the field mission, which took place from May 22-27, 2011. Additional documents were obtained from other relevant sources (see list of documents consulted in Annex 3).

The field mission was very full, and included travel to Bitola, Prilep, Gostivar and Kumanovo, as well as time spent in Skopje. Meetings, semi-structured interviews and informal discussions were held with a number of project stakeholders in the various locations visited. There were two long meetings with the Roma Centre of Skopje (RCS), the grantee, at the beginning and towards the end of the field research period. During the visits to centres outside Skopje, there were meetings with local self-government officials (elected and appointed) associated with the Equal Opportunity Commissions, as well as Roma NGOs, mainly focusing on Roma women. Meetings were also held with small groups of trainees who took part in the youth initiative training program (see list of interviewees in Annex 3). In Skopje, those met also included representatives of a women’s NGO, and officials of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. There was also a meeting with the UN Resident Coordinator and the Assistant Representative of UNDP to review the UN and donor dimension of the Roma situation in FYROM (the Resident Coordinator has a strong interest in Roma issues). Finally, there were meetings in Skopje and Gostivar with trainers involved with the NGO capacity development and youth initiative programs.

(iii) Development Context

This project took place against a background where Roma people in FYROM face widespread discrimination in all spheres of life, including housing, education and access to justice, and where forced evictions are common. Further, Roma themselves have received little training to enable them to understand their rights and take a strong role in combating discrimination. As a result, Roma organizations struggle for resources and have difficulty in making an impact. “Gender Equality and Equity – Follow up to CEDAW and Romani Women” represented an effort by the grantee, the Roma Centre of Skopje, to further its work

in focusing, directly and indirectly, on addressing the needs of Romani women: a vulnerable population within the most marginalized ethnic minority in the country.

The General Situation in the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (FYROM)

The year 2011 marks the 20 year anniversary of FYROM's independence. Over the last two decades, the Government has generated considerable momentum for political, economic and social reforms, including the promotion of equitable and inclusive development based on respect for human rights. The European Union (EU) and NATO accession agendas enjoy strong support from the public. As such, they have driven important reforms while serving as consensus-building vehicles in relations among ethnic communities and political parties. However, the country's continued momentum – driven by the common goal of Euro-Atlantic integration – rests on the resolution of the long-standing dispute with Greece over the country's name: NATO membership and EU accession cannot formally begin until the name dispute is resolved. This lack of resolve, coupled with the recent financial crisis, has led to a perception of stalled development, which, in turn, has given rise to increased tensions or perceptions of poor inter-ethnic relations and political discontent.

The year 2011 also marks the 10th anniversary of the internationally-mediated Ohrid Framework Agreement (OFA), which brought the country's internal conflict to an end. Among other characteristics, the OFA, which identified decentralization as a major instrument for stability in the country, laid the foundations for increased citizen access to democratic institutions, civic engagement in decision-making processes, and the improvement of public service delivery to help reduce horizontal inequalities between different communities.

With a small, open economy, FYROM is vulnerable to economic developments in Europe, and dependent on regional integration and progress toward EU membership for continued economic growth. At independence in September 1991, the country was the least developed of the Yugoslav republics, producing a mere 5% of the total federal output of goods and services.



In the last decade, the economy grew on average at the rate of 2-3%, while in 2007 and 2008 growth rates have achieved a respectable 6.1% and 5.0% respectively. These positive trends were obstructed by the global financial and economic crises. However, the country has weathered the global crises relatively well. In 2009, GDP contracted by 0.8%. In 2010, growth has picked up again and preliminary projections indicate a GDP growth of approximately 1%. Official unemployment remains high at 32%, but may be overstated based on the existence of an extensive gray market, estimated to be more than 20% of GDP that is not captured by official statistics. The incidence of poverty in the country is high and persistent. According to Government data (Household Budget Survey), in 2010 more than 30 % of people fell below the poverty line. Income inequalities are widening, suggesting that for the poor, the living and social standards of the rest of the population are increasingly out of reach.

FYROM and the Roma

According to the last census, 2.66% or 53,879 of the 2,022,547 citizens of FYROM were Roma. However there are unofficial figures that put the Roma population at 135,490. The data shows that the Roma population predominantly lives in urban centres (95%), in poorer

areas (ghettos), or in suburban areas. The largest part of the population of Roma households (48%) lives in the Skopje area. The suburb of Suto Orizari, on the outskirts of the capital, Skopje, is said to be the largest and the only self-governed Roma community in the world. With a majority Roma population, Suto Orizari is led by a Romani mayor.

In terms of ethnicity, in areas of Roma settlement, 82% of the districts are populated by Roma, 10% are mixed and only 8% of the districts where Roma live are dominated by other ethnic groups. For many reasons, many Roma seek to put aside their ethnic identity and adopt that of other nations, such as Turkey, Albania or Egypt. Many of the Roma in the country still live in extreme poverty and inadequate housing and living conditions. According to Roma Education Fund (REF) data for 2007, 89 % of the Romani population lives below the poverty line, which is nearly three times higher than the poverty rate for the population as a whole. In addition, REF reports indicate that the unemployment rate amongst Roma is 70%, which is double the national rate of 35%. The Roma in FYROM enjoy greater representation in local and national government than in neighbouring countries. However, surveys conducted in 2008 to monitor the progress of the Macedonian government with its Decade of Roma commitment found that FYROM does not dedicate sufficient attention to the implementation of Roma-targeted policies. A major push forward in every priority area regarding Roma Inclusion has been made by the international and donor community. Some improvements have been made, particularly in education.

Education is the sector where reforms favouring the Roma are most advanced, although strongly driven by external financing. The government is providing some financial support through line ministries, but most activities rely on co-funding by the Roma Education Fund (World Bank and Open Society Institute) and other donors. The main activities in this area, mostly co-financed, are promoting access to pre-school facilities, and scholarships for primary, secondary and higher education students. A systematic approach by government to Roma schooling is absent, and, despite improvements, the level of educational attainment of the Roma population remains unacceptably low. REF data show that, of the 96% of Romani children who enroll in primary school, approximately 25% drop out by the fifth grade, while nearly half of all Romani students fail to complete the full cycle of primary education. Of the 12.8% of Romani primary school graduates who continue onto secondary education, approximately 44% drop out before completing their studies, and only 0.3% of Roma enroll in tertiary education. While there has been some improvement in the sphere of education, there is a long way to go.

However, the picture in the **health sector** is far more negative. According to the Decade Watch Report, in the context of the generally poor performance of the Macedonian healthcare system, the health status of Roma is further influenced by a set of mutually-reinforcing factors. Inappropriate living conditions coincide with extremely poor hygiene conditions in the Roma settlements. In such settings are found a much higher incidence of infectious illnesses, and almost endemic occurrence of certain diseases, such as tuberculosis; and all other health indicators are poorest amongst Roma, with no possibility for substantial improvement in sight.

Roma Civil Society

During the last 15 years of democratic development in FYROM, approximately 200 associations of citizens engaged in various issues concerning the Roma community have emerged. Among these, 120 are Roma NGOs – founded by Roma citizens and dedicated to Roma issues. Some of these organisations started with humanitarian missions, but, with support of international donors, they later grew into organisations dealing with such topics as: women's issues, human rights and social-political inclusion, and cultural and educational problems. In the meantime, capacity building measures helped them develop a core of trained activists, who form a critical mass of Roma people with the knowledge, skills, and

motivation to accept the challenges in their own community and assist in the search for solutions to current problems. For all this, Roma civil society remains weak.

The two national foundations, supported by international donors, the Macedonian Center for International Cooperation and the Foundation Open Society Institute – FYROM, have Roma programmes on their agenda and continuously support Roma and non-Roma organisations with work on Roma issues. The major support in this area goes to the sphere of education. About 48% of NGOs have a mission to improve the educational status of Roma and, consequently, to contribute to overcoming the extremely unfavourable socio-economic situation of the Roma community. At the same time, about one-third of Roma NGOs are focused on protection of human rights, raising awareness among Roma citizens about their rights and protection mechanisms, and offering them legal protection in cases of human rights violations. The rest of the Roma NGOs are either women's, children's or youth organisations, or they deal with language and cultural issues. All Macedonian NGOs are entirely dependent on donor funding for all aspects of their work and for covering core costs. Virtually all government initiatives to support Roma needs depend on international funds and/or funding obtained through Roma NGOs.

Gender Inequality and Roma Women:

Romani women face both gender-based and racial discrimination. They experience discrimination in access to education, health care and employment. In addition, they must cope with major problems of domestic violence. In the wake of the recently adopted Law on Equal Opportunities (2006) and the establishment of a Department for Equal Opportunities within the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy (MLSP), some attention was given to discrimination as it affects Roma women. The specific needs of Roma women were identified in the Action Plan for Roma Women 2008-2010. However, little room has been found in the state budget to act on these priority needs

III. Project strategy

(i) Logical Framework

The logical impact diagram that follows is based on the project logic as set out in the project document. With six distinct (immediate) outcomes identified in the project document, it is not easy to capture the project logic in this way.

Project activities & interventions	Outputs	Development Objectives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training on human rights, GE and HRs protection mechanisms, organization & leadership for Young Roma and non-Roma leaders. • Support for small youth training initiatives at local level to be led by trainees. • Training for Romani women’s local NGO leaders. • Support to develop strategic plans and strengthen NGO organizational infrastructure. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased confidence and competence of Roma and other young activists in targeting, organizing and undertaking GE advocacy campaigns. • Enhanced awareness of HRs and GE by young people in 5 cities. • Capacities of local Roma women’s NGOs enhanced. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhanced Capacity of Roma Women’s NGOs and of young Roma (and selected non-Roma) to understand how to operate in governance system and take effective, pro-active role in fighting discrimination and rights deprivation. • Women’s NGOs at local level capable of adopting strategies for serving their constituencies and working towards sustainability.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expert Gender analysis of programs of Roma political parties. • Promotion of recommendations for adoption by parties. • Guidance & support for local initiatives linking municipalities & Roma women’s NGOs in GE mainstreaming. • Training of Roma women NGO representatives on research methodology, data collection and documentation. • Support to field research. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhanced knowledge of and commitment to GE by Roma political parties to GE; • Engendering of party platforms. • Capacity enhanced for collaborative Implementation of small initiatives between Roma women’s NGOs & municipalities. • Database for women created in 6 municipalities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhanced experience of political parties in focusing on mainstreaming Romani women’s needs. • Enhanced experience of local authorities in focusing on mainstreaming Romani women’s needs. • Broadened, systematic, knowledge base of situation of Roma women across FYROM in spheres included in CEDAW Convention.

(ii) Project approach

The project had two primary audiences: Roma women's NGOs and young Roma women activists. There were three additional audiences: local government officials; young people, Roma and non-Roma; and, officials of Roma political parties. Through the project, RCS sought to follow up on some key priorities established in its strategic plan for 2008-2010. These, in turn, were based on assessment of the Centre's experience in the preceding years. The principal activities pursued in relation to these audiences were as follows:

Roma Women's NGOs: Through a competitive process, the project selected three Roma



women's NGOs to receive support with organizational capacity development. For each organization, there was a needs assessment. This was followed by a process through which RCS worked with each beneficiary organization in building a tailor-made package of assistance to be provided, working from a menu of options. For each organization, modest funds were provided for the organization to use to strengthen its operations, or pay essential costs.

Strategic planning session at the offices of KHAM, one of the organizations supported

In addition, each received support for a strategic planning process, guided

and assisted by RCS staff and consultants. Beyond this, resources were available for delivery of training modules in such areas as financial management, administration, computer skills, etc. A key feature of this component was the extent to which each organization was able to control its own program and participate in selecting its own consultants and trainers.

Young Roma Women Activists: Two project components (or elements of components) focused on this group. Each was concerned with strengthening both leadership and technical skills among the young generation of Roma women (under 25). The first aimed to train a group of young women, selected from those nominated by Roma NGOs, to act as trainers in support of the capacity development process for Roma Women's NGOs. Once initial training was completed, a small number of the most capable trainees would be selected for advanced training and would then be able to provide support in strategic planning to the three NGOs, as discussed above. The second initiative involved working in partnership with women's associations from six urban centres to identify, recruit and train a small group of young women in research methodology to enable them to take the lead in data collection on the situation of Romani women in their communities. This, in turn, would provide input to a data-base concerning those fields covered in the CEDAW Convention. This additional data would supplement information gathered and reported by RCS in its 2005 CEDAW for Roma Women Project. As before, the intention was to use the data for advocacy and dialogue purposes, in pressing for actions on key issues facing Roma women.

Local Government Officials: The project's work in this component focused on cooperation with three municipalities where Equality Commissions have been established, and where, on paper, Roma women's issues have been mainstreamed in their annual plans. The Commissions are sub-committees of the municipal councils, and the members are elected councilors. In the three towns concerned, Prilep, Bitola and Stip, RCS planned to fund small initiatives (\$1,500 for each town) directed to selected priorities set out in the annual plans, with matching funds from the municipality. This aspect of the project built on a similar, earlier experience of cooperation at municipal level in 2007. The work was to be planned and implemented by the RCS local contact person in each case, working with the Commission. The contact person would also liaise with local Roma women's organizations and other NGOs. The aim was to make Roma concerns more visible to local municipalities and to build and/or strengthen working relationships between the Commissions and Roma women's organizations.

Roma Political Party Officials: Building on earlier workshops with Roma political parties, and responding to a request from party representatives for further assistance, this project component dealt with gender equality (GE) in party platforms. With this in mind, RCS planned to recruit an external GE expert to work with the parties with the objective of "engendering" party programs. There are six registered political parties of Roma in FYROM. The presidents of two of them are currently serving in the parliament: the Union of Roma in Macedonia, which is a member of the broader ruling coalition, and the United Party of Roma in Macedonia, which was a member of the broader coalition for the previous government. One of them was subsequently appointed Minister without Portfolio. Almost all elected Roma run within ethnic Roma parties, whilst they remain underrepresented in mainstream ones. All major political parties, regardless of whether they are in power or in opposition, have virtually identical positions on Roma issues. The Roma parties are absorbed within broader political coalitions and do not appear to advocate for Roma priorities, but rather represent broader political interests and obtain their reward for delivering the Roma vote. The programs of the Roma parties are low-key, if visible at all. There has been no attention to Roma women's issues, and Roma women have low status within the party hierarchies. The project sought to build on earlier contacts and cooperation with the parties in an effort to secure greater attention to gender equality on their part.

Roma and Other Youth: "Youth Empowerment": The objective for this aspect of the project was to prepare a new group of future leaders, trained on leadership, human rights and gender equality, and able to act as future advocates for equality in all spheres of life. In support of this objective, RCS planned to train 60 young people, Roma and non-Roma, selected through an "open call" process, working through Roma and other NGO networks, universities and high schools, to attract suitable applications from throughout the country. The idea was to bring young people together, with some 70% Roma and 30% non-Roma trainees, and with equal numbers of young women and young men. In practice, there were a total of 62 participants, of whom 33 were Roma (53%). As to gender balance, 35 (56%) were female. The trainees would be divided into three groups, and for each group there would be two rounds of training, each lasting three days (Friday-Sunday), and taking place at regional centres. **The first round** of training would deal with: the role of youth and youth programs; leadership characteristics and skills; human rights and anti-discrimination; gender equality; and, community issues. **The second round** of training would reinforce what had been learned in the initial sessions, while moving on to focus on lobbying and advocacy skills, communications and how to organize an advocacy campaign.

The trainees were encouraged to prepare, individually or in small groups, proposals for small-scale local activities to put in practice what had been learned. Applications would be reviewed and some would be selected by RCS for implementation. For each successful proposal, a small financial contribution (\$300) would be provided to cover direct expenses.

(iii) Strategic aspects

Established as a non-governmental and non-partisan organization, The Roma Centre in Skopje (RCS) was established in February 1998 as a part of the regional initiative of the Roma Participation Program at the Open Society Institute in Budapest, aiming at forming and strengthening non-governmental structures in the local Roma Communities. The main pillar of all RCS's activities has been to promote the socio-economic, educational and cultural position of the Roma population. RCS operates on the basis of two key principles: equality and respecting differences of all kinds. When designing and implementing all programs and projects, RCS complies with the following guidelines: Respect for differences; the Right to a different opinion; Equality in every respect; Agreed criteria for selection and participation of participants in its activities. These guidelines are quite evident in the UNDEF project.

As noted above, the project built on the strategic plan that RCS had developed for 2008-2010, and its earlier project "Implementation of CEDAW for Romani Women", and follow-up initiatives (2005-2008). All project components were



Young people in Prilep planning a "local action", which followed the "Youth Empowerment" training.

designed to address issues deriving from research conducted through the previous project. These included: capacity gaps for Roma women's organizations; limits in the awareness of Roma, non-Roma and public officials, concerning the rights of Roma, and gender equality; and, the limited civic engagement on the part of young people, Roma and non-Roma. The weaknesses in mainstreaming gender equality and Roma women's concerns into public policies and programs were addressed through the municipal government and Roma political party components of the project.

RCS plays a special role in Roma civil society in its emphasis on gender equality and in providing a voice, as well as practical support to Roma women's NGOs, which tend to be small, local in scope, and lacking resources. Despite its determination to take an independent stand, the organization also has credibility in government for its knowledge of gender equality, CEDAW, and the situation of Roma women in FYROM. Its network extends across the country. While donor funding is available to larger organizations which provide services, particularly in health and education, there is little money available for small Roma women's NGOs, or for work concerning social and political inclusion of Roma communities. RCS itself is a small organization, with four full-time staff and one part-timer. It depends on support from The Open Society Institute (OSI) to cover its modest operating funds, including the salaries of its staff, and to provide some support for program work. The UNDEF project enabled the organization to continue some of its earlier work, while also addressing other priorities set out in its strategic plan. By matching UNDEF funds with its OSI support (\$50,000 for two years), RCS was able to extend the scope and reach of what would have been possible with the UNDEF funds alone.

The project strategy was for RCS to do as much as possible with limited funds in moving the organization's agenda forward. All activities supported were relevant and worthwhile. Through an extremely careful and parsimonious allocation of funds to different areas of activity, the organization was able to undertake a long list of activities and, thus, achieve its

own objective. Yet, from an external perspective, it is apparent that there were insufficient funds for some activities, where follow-up was badly needed. The grantee tried to do too much through the project, for entirely understandable reasons. It would have benefited from advice about the benefits of focusing and concentrating its efforts on a shorter list of components, each pursued further, thus enhancing the prospect for impact.

At the same time, it must be acknowledged that, in a country where there is a broad failure on the part of government to match its rhetoric on commitment to Roma inclusion and improvements in the standard of living of the Roma community with budgetary support, and where civil society is 100% donor-dependent, it is difficult to visualize sustainability of results. Most effective programs will require continuing support if initial gains are to be secured. For some of the women's NGOs supported through the project, it is a struggle to pay the rent for small, low cost facilities, and not all are likely to survive.

It must also be appreciated that once the project had been approved, it proved difficult for RCS to change course. If it was an error to try to do so much, it must also be emphasized that the grantee did everything in its power to make a success of the program to which it had committed itself. It is an exceptionally competent and dedicated group, managed by a tight, mutually supportive team and an inspirational leader, who is providing the space to allow others to take leading roles on key activities. This was demonstrated in the project.

IV. Evaluation Findings

The evaluation is based on a set of evaluation questions or EQs, designed to cover the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability; plus the issue of UNDEF value added. The Evaluation Questions and related sub-questions are presented in Annex 1.

(i) Relevance

The project addressed a number of important needs in the sphere of human rights and democratic participation, central to UNDEF's mandate. The audiences addressed were all relevant to efforts to improve the condition of the Roma of FYROM, and particularly Roma women. By focusing on Roma youth and young activists, particularly, though not exclusively, young women, it sought to address in a practical way the weakness of Roma civil society organizations, and particularly those led by and working for Roma women, in undertaking advocacy on behalf of their own people. Roma women's organizations are mainly small, local in focus, and lacking regular funding, facilities and paid staff. Further, there have been few opportunities for Roma NGO representatives to benefit from systematic training on rights issues of urgent concern to their communities or to acquire practical skills to support social change. In this respect, the project was seeking to make a contribution to filling an important set of needs.

Further, it is apparent that there is a serious gap in the understanding of local government personnel – as with parliamentarians, the general public and mass media - concerning the factors underlying the marginalization of the Roma population. This goes along with an apparent disregard of the poor fit between state social policies and programs and the needs of Roma communities and families. The feature of the project's effort at municipal level to enhance cooperation with public officials and improve their understanding of current

problems for Roma women represented an effort to close this gap and strengthen communications between Roma community leaders and activists and public officials. Roma interests and priorities seem largely invisible in the political process, both nationally and at local level. The initiative at municipal level represented one means of addressing this gap. The work planned with Roma political parties was another. One of the most troubling aspects of the situation of the Roma in FYROM's governance system is the weakness of articulation of community interests by elected Roma officials and Roma political organizations. The initiative to "engender" party platforms was an ambitious effort to encourage a more responsive and responsible approach to their constituents on the part of Roma political leaders.

In summary, the project is seen as highly relevant to UNDEF's priorities. It was also well-adapted to the local context and in keeping with the needs and priorities of the Roma community.

(ii) Effectiveness

None of the components of the project was large in budgetary terms or scope, but most were complex and demanding in the management attention they required for coordination, communications, contracting, logistics and trouble-shooting. It is probably the case that the organization had underestimated what would be required of it in coping with so many different sets of activities simultaneously. For all that, the staff coped very well with the pressure of work and managed to get things done. The project met the test of effectiveness by completing all activities within the set timeframe (extended by one month). While some questions may be asked about project strategy and the wisdom of trying to cover so much ground (as noted above), the ability of RCS to complete the work as planned is impressive, and the project was managed in a professional way.

The quality of the technical inputs, notably in training and facilitation, was generally good. The methodologies for the principal forms of training work were effective and appropriate. One of the sessions for youth training received some negative responses, but, otherwise, there was a very positive response from the trainees. The group of trainees who met with the evaluators in Prilep seemed particularly motivated to build on what they had learned. The quality of the consultants selected for the provision of the short-term training (finance, fund-raising, organizational development, etc.) seems to have been mixed. There was a determination on the part of RCS to use only Roma trainers. They were selected through a competitive bidding process, and fees were set at a low level.

Clearly, the project experienced problems in attracting the desired level of interest among young Roma and others in applying to participate in activities (youth leadership training and young women activists for strategic planning). Despite a strong effort to reach potential applicants, in neither case did RCS receive the expected level of applications and this had some effect on the profile of trainees selected, and, at least in the case of the young women activists, the result. It is apparent that Roma youth are not an easy group to reach, and it is suggested that their use of the internet, where it is available to them, is for entertainment and not for civic engagement. For those who did participate in the training, it appears to have been an enriching and horizon-shifting experience. The project faced a number of difficulties in implementation, and, while it found alternative and effective ways to adapt and respond where such problems arose, it is apparent that, through its never-failing optimism, RCS underestimated the level of risk in several components of the project. The most serious problems arose in one component, focusing on Roma Political Parties, and in an important element of a second, the training of young Roma women activists to provide technical support in the capacity development of NGOs.

Despite earlier expressions of interest, at a time leading up to national elections, and despite persistent efforts by RCS, the parties proved to be unwilling to share their programs, or to meet with the expert retained by RCS to discuss the issue of gender equality in their policies and programs. In the event, RCS decided to ask the expert to prepare a short, informative handbook, *Because It Matters: Empowerment of Women in Political Parties*. A public meeting was held to launch the publication, and, among others, representatives of three of the six official Roma parties attended. Copies were distributed to all the Roma parties, as well as to NGOs and women activists. While this alternative was very much a “second best” option, it did represent a thoughtful way to rescue the situation and keep the issue alive.

In the second area, the training of young Roma women activists and the selection of a small number of the most competent to support the capacity development of the Roma women’s NGOs, RCS faced a major disappointment. The work began as planned. The training methodology was designed. A call for applications went out to all the women’s NGOs who had applied for support under the capacity development component, as well as to a selected group of the female participants in the youth training component.

Eight of the ten young women who were selected participated in the training in Skopje, which aimed to strengthen their practical knowledge and skills, including facilitation. However, only one of the trainees proved able to master the training material and to have the capabilities to lead a strategic planning session. The two other places in the strategic planning teams to be filled by the trainees were filled by one present and one former RCS staff member with the necessary skills. It is apparent that the expectation that a short-term training workshop could fill the gap in knowledge and skills, as well as personal self-confidence, for the young women, was too optimistic.



Training session for the “Youth Empowerment” initiative in Prilep)

Overall, while all work was completed as planned, and outputs delivered, for all components there is a clear impression that more was needed to achieve full results. For example, all of the women’s NGOs benefited from the capacity development support, including training, strategic planning and concrete financial assistance. All three organizations indicated their satisfaction with the assistance provided. Overall, RCS and its consultants did well within the budget parameters set as a result of its funding allocations within the project. Yet, in most cases, the training was too brief, as was the period of financial support. Similarly, to be fully effective, the support for strategic planning required ongoing monitoring and follow-up to determine whether the organization was able to make good use of the new knowledge and skills. The organizations supported were somewhat different from one another in character and experience, but all needed longer-term “accompaniment” by RCS.

The other element of the component that was incomplete was the training of the young women who were to support the strategic planning work. The members of this group might well have longer-term potential. As it was, they experienced yet another of the “one-off” workshops which are a regular feature of small donor-funded projects in Eastern, central and

SE Europe. It would have been helpful for RCS to find a way to maintain contact with the group and, through its network, to identify other opportunities for them to build their skills and self-confidence. Perhaps this is being done outside the project, but, as it was, it stood out as one of several pieces of unfinished business. This issue will be considered further under Section (iv), Impact, below.

(iii) Efficiency

RCS manages funds with extreme care, and, throughout the project, its staff demonstrated a very strong sense of accountability for the budget. They worked extremely hard to ensure that all aspects of the project were managed in a cost-effective way. Throughout the project, the grantee maintained firm control over costs. All contracts for training and facilitation were put up for competitive bidding. Similarly, all trainees were selected through a competitive process. The plans for activities under the municipal government cooperation component, along with budgets, including matching funds from the municipal governments, had to be approved by RCS. This certainly led to keeping costs down, and the project ended with some unspent funds, as a result of savings on travel expenditures. This parsimonious approach made it possible for RCS do so much with limited funds - although it might also be noted that a few thousand dollars can go a long way in FYROM. At the same time, it may be argued that most project components were short of funds. All delivered the planned outputs, yet all ended abruptly when there was a need for further work or follow up. A more results-focused approach to budgeting might have brought about a change in the pattern of allocation and the dropping of some components in favor of optimizing impact.

There were a few areas, other than those noted in section (iii) above (capacity development support and guidance to Roma political parties), where the project departed from the original plan. In one of the municipalities, Stip, where the cooperation with the Equality Commissions was to have taken place, the local RCS coordinator failed to meet his obligations and his contract was terminated. He was not replaced, and project funds to support the work in Stip were reallocated to support work with the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy (the Sector for Equal Opportunities) in preparing and completing the National Action Plan for Romani Women. The cost of this initiative was \$2,050.

(iv) Impact

▪ Roma Women's NGOs:

The evaluation team met with all three of the NGOs supported, and found that all benefited from the capacity development support provided, including training, strategic planning and concrete financial assistance. The three organizations supported were: KHAM (Roma Humanitarian Association for Women) in Kumanovo, ZAR, the Women's Development Association in Gostivar, and AMBRELA, the Centre for Integration, in Suto Orizari, the predominantly Roma suburb of Skopje. All were extremely positive about the assistance received. In terms of the scope of its work and the numbers of people involved, AMBRELA, which has a focus on educational support for young children and their parents, girls' education and efforts to keep Roma children in school, and more broadly on the most vulnerable and marginalized in the Roma population, is a larger and more dynamic organization. Yet, for all that, its financial situation is difficult. The organization has operated for ten years. Its main funding comes from OSI through the REF. It has two well-qualified leaders, along with three other staff members, but it decided to focus the capacity development program on building up the capabilities and commitment of a group of six young people, volunteers and members of the NGO, who take part in the educational work. They received short-term training in:

- Finance;

- Office administration;
- Organizational work;
- Project cycle management;
- Fund-raising; and,
- Advocacy and lobbying.

The training was well-received by the participants and has made a difference to their ability to contribute to the organization. Because of the initial assessment made of organizational needs, the training was tailored to the learning needs of the less experienced members of the AMBRELA team. The whole group, volunteers, management and staff, participated in the strategy development sessions, which were led by a young team from RCS. The work was done over three weeks at weekends. The process was very effective in building a strong sense of identity among the younger participants with the organization and a clearer understanding of its mandate. They were also treated as contributors to the decisions made in the strategy sessions and this gave them a sense of empowerment. They also came to see their own roles and responsibilities within the bigger picture of the organization and its objectives.



One of the strategy development sessions at KHAM.

In terms of skills development, the young trainees seem to have been particularly stimulated by the module on advocacy, lobbying and effective communications, as well as gaining a fuller appreciation of the importance of fund raising. Beyond this, the strategy development process also ensured that all participants shared the same understanding of the organization, its development, and its priority tasks.

Overall, the capacity development assistance has made a difference to AMBRELA, perhaps not a fundamental one, but important nevertheless. There was a good mutual understanding between RCS and its team and AMBRELA, and the young strategy development team was ideal for working with the young members of the organization. What was critical to the effectiveness of the process was the capacity of the beneficiary organization to determine how the assistance could be of maximum value, and to make sound choices in determining on the appropriate mix of training activities to be selected from the menu. Of course, RCS was also an important contributor in assisting AMBRELA to determine the appropriate formula and to find the right people to make it work.

The other two organizations involved in this component, KHAM and ZAR, are smaller and lack the membership and volunteer base of AMBRELA. Consequently, they chose to focus support on the members of their respective core teams. The support, particularly the strategy development guidance, was helpful to both organizations in focusing their work, and, in the case of ZAR, strengthening their self-belief. It is not clear that either of the two was able to use the other forms of training effectively. Neither organization is strong. KHAM is facing a financial crunch, since its core funds have derived from the REP, and its financial support is ending this month (June 2011). ZAR lacks consistent external funding, although it has received funds from OSI for work in women's health, and also from UNIFEM (now UN Women) on the same topic. It operates almost like an extended family, whose members find

ways to support the organization and pay the rent for its facilities. The members take pride in the fact that “we have brought women out of their homes to do things other than housekeeping.”

While both organizations gained from the project, the impact was less than in the case of AMBRELA. This was largely because of a difference in organizational capacities of the beneficiary organization at the outset. Through this component, RCS was determined to provide support to those organizations which needed it most. However, as in all spheres of development cooperation, organizations need to reach a certain level of capacity and experience in order to take full advantage of available support. ZAR, and to a lesser degree KHAM, were not in a position to take control of the process in the way that AMBRELA could. For the two smaller organizations, what was required was a longer getting-acquainted period at the beginning, with the needs assessment building on this. Support could then have been phased in over a longer time. The cost would not necessarily be greater, but the need for both RCS and its team and the beneficiary organization to take the time to appreciate how the process could be most effective is quite apparent. As it stands, the inputs provided by RCS were of real value, but the condensing of the support into a short time was less than ideal.

A further feature of this component of the project was the provision whereby the beneficiary organization was able to make decisions on which combination of technical support it would request. It seems to the evaluators that there is a strong case for RCS to have taken a stronger stance in its advice to the organizations on the options available, given what the needs assessment revealed. The rationale for placing the decisions in the hands of beneficiaries is admirable, but, in practice, it seems that more professional advice might have been called for.

In summary, the impact of this important component of the project was reduced by the limiting factors of time and budget. Results were accomplished with all three NGOs assisted, but even in the case of the most successful of the three interventions, the support was viewed as too short-lived.

- Young Roma Women Activists

As discussed above, there were two separate initiatives: one to train young, educated Roma women to undertake field research on the situation of women in their communities using tested methods, which RCS had employed before. In the second case, the focus was on young women known to local NGOs who would be trained to become team members in the planning and delivery of capacity development support to the 3 NGOs, as considered immediately above. In the first case, the initiative unfolded according to plan. In the second, the effort to find young women activists to play a role in the capacity development component succeeded in finding only one individual capable of playing the expected role. In part, the difference in the results achieved in the two initiatives would seem to derive from the more rigorous selection methods, and the higher educational levels of the applicants selected for training, in the first case. In a small way, the project has contributed to the objective of strengthening the capacities of one of its key audiences, young women activists. It has also experienced disappointment in this regard. Finding young Roma women who have the initial experience or education to enable them to participate in civic affairs, along with the motivation to do so is not an easy task. One of the lessons learned by RCS relates to the relative effectiveness of the recruitment process in the two cases.

- Database on the Situation of Roma Women

Field research took place in seven urban centres from March-July 2010. RCs provided support in initial training, piloting interviews and preparatory training before the interviews began. It also monitored each researcher (working in teams of two), and provided customized support as required. On completion, an evaluation meeting was held with the

whole team in Skopje. All researchers reported that they were satisfied with the experience that they had gained. The data collected sums up the situation of 431 Romani women, with an age range of 14-62. It deals with education, socio-economic and health status, number of children, as well as housing, sanitation conditions, forms of discrimination experienced and domestic violence. RCs produced a booklet based on the research and distributed it following the completion of project activities in December 2010. The expected results were accomplished. It is expected that the data will be used for short-term information and advocacy purposes, and in the next "Shadow Report" on CEDAW and Romani Women, scheduled for 2011, to be submitted to the UN CEDAW Committee (the last was published in 2005). The previous report was widely cited and used by international organizations (including the Government of Canada in consideration of refugee claims by Romani women from FYROM). Hence, given the experience of RCS in using such data as a basis for recommendations on policy and program changes, it is likely that the data will have a longer term impact.

- **Cooperation with Local Government**

This component of the project was carried out effectively in two of the three municipalities, and not completed in the third. However, to the evaluators, this was the component of the project most lacking in impact. The reasons for this are stated most succinctly by RCS in its Final Report ("GCs" refers to Gender Commissions, now known officially as Equality Commissions): "Based on our internal evaluation and all meetings held with the representatives from the GCs in Prilep and Bitola, RCS believes that the GCs are still not fully aware of their responsibilities, do not have a budget to implement their annual programs and thus are fully depended (sic) from the higher municipal authorities and their will, not all of the members of the GCs are active or sensitive and trained on gender issues and especially minority issues. RCS believes that at present, both national and local authorities are reluctant to plan and budget serious and long-term interventions for Roma and Romani women without funds coming from international donors". Some progress was made in that the two municipalities, Bitola and Prilep, committed their own funds to match those provide by RCS through the project. This was a breakthrough. However, although representatives of the Commissions in Bitola and Prilep were appreciative for the support provided by RCS and welcomed the activities supported, they do not seem willing take a pro-active role in reaching out to, or involving the Roma community. The expectation is that it will be the Roma community which reaches out to them and which secures the funding. A similar attitude prevails at national government level. It is understandable that RCS wished to continue with earlier efforts to stimulate cooperation between Roma civil society and the municipalities. Yet the activities supported, while worthwhile in their own right, did nothing to change the disposition of local government, and the impact was minimal. For the future, it will be better to deploy funds in a different way.

- **Cooperation with Roma Political Parties**

The project experienced a major setback in this component of programming. There is very poor cooperation between the Roma parties and civil society, due to a lack of trust, and there is a very limited presence of women as party activists or decision-makers. Gender equality is not a priority for the major parties in FYROM, and the same is true for the Roma parties. RCS recognizes that there are no prospects for advance in this respect in the short term. It does believe that it may be possible to work with younger party members with a view to the future. Overall, while the handbook produced concerning the engendering of political party programs is a useful and user-friendly piece of work, this part of the project had minimal impact.

- **Youth Empowerment**

The training of young Roma and nearly equal numbers from other ethnic groups in FYROM was generally successful. For the most part, the training methodology was sound and the training modules relevant and appropriate to their audience. The trainers were well-regarded.

The local initiatives were valuable in providing the opportunity for gaining practical experience, and valued by those who were engaged with them. However, the limited response by trainees to the opportunity to submit proposals for local action was a disappointment. Similarly, the overall number of applicants was less than expected, and it proved impossible to meet the target for the numbers of young Roma participating. In at least one community, Kumanovo, there were no Roma participants. Two were selected, but they dropped out. It is difficult to assess impact for an initiative of this kind. According to the RCS internal evaluation, half of the trainees are involved in youth activities in their home communities, and, in the short term, they may well be able to utilize some of what has been learned in working in such activities. However, it should be noted that the young people, Roma and others, who were involved are drawn from the more advantaged sectors of society, and include many who may well move away from their communities. Benefits accrue to individuals, and this is positive, but may be lost to their home communities. One promising development is observable in both Prilep and Gostivar, where local trainees are working with Roma NGOs. In both cases, this came about as a result of support provided by the NGO to the preparation and implementation of the local action that followed the training. In Prilep, several of the young people who were involved in the local action to draw attention to discrimination against young Roma in cafes and restaurants which deny them access, are working as volunteers with SOS Roma, a well-organized NGO working primarily in the health sector. In Gostivar, the very small “family NGO” ZAR now finds itself, rather unexpectedly, with a youth wing, a group of young people who continue to work together following the local action, and who have brought new life to the organization.



Youth training sessions

In this project component, as in others, there was a need to follow up, to build on an interesting beginning, and provide ongoing support of some kind to the trainees. The model of what took place in Prilep and Gostivar provides some insight on what might have been possible on a broader basis. Similarly, the effort by AMBRELA to recruit and engage young people from the community in its work provides an inspiration. It is quite apparent that young Roma, particularly, are proving to be a challenging group to engage with. What was done in the project was encouraging as

a start, and acted as a catalyst or motivator for at least some of the young people, but such an initiative is too short term to have impact.

Beyond this, the achievement of the project in developing an effective format for bringing young people of different ethnic backgrounds together and working with them in a safe setting on leadership, and on discrimination and inequality and methods of combating them, should not be overlooked. For the most part, the curriculum and the interactive techniques used for delivery of much of the learning was very effective. This methodology and approach can be used again if couched in terms of a longer-term engagement with the young people concerned.

(v) Sustainability

The grantee used the funding from this project to take forward its agenda on several fronts. For all initiatives supported, there will be a need for further funding, if the journey is to continue. Given the limited funds available to support activities with Roma women's NGOs, or for engagement with the democratic process by Roma women or youth, every project is a beginning, and nothing is completed. There is minimal commitment by the government to the improvement of the situation of Roma. It is understood that the Roma dimension is one of the priority concerns raised by the EU in its deliberations with FYROM over the country's eventual accession. Eventually, this is likely to have an effect. In the meantime, there has been little in the way of a concrete response by the government. Every project of this kind is valuable in simply keeping things going. Without a change in the broader context, little will be sustainable in the way the term is normally understood. All actors engaged in the project are positive about the experience and keen to do more, but all need additional funds for substantial further developments to take place.



Local action initiative in Prilep

(vi) UNDEF value added

As noted earlier, the project was a clear fit with UNDEF priorities. The systematic exclusion of the Roma from access to public services and economic opportunities, brought about by a combination of deliberate state action, neglect and widespread prejudice, is quite apparent in FYROM, even though the situation may not be as bad as in some of the surrounding countries. RCS is working in areas where there is little alternative funding available, and the UNDEF funding enabled it to expand its programming and to offer some support to other organizations which form part of its network, while also taking forward other important ideas intended to strengthen the engagement of Roma with the public realm. The focus on Roma women and youth is particularly valuable. UNDEF support has been important to RCS in reinforcing its credibility with domestic partners and with OSI in Budapest, its principal source of support. Activities under the project, and the UNDEF flag, have also reinforced its visibility with UN agencies.

V. Conclusions

The conclusions presented here represent a synthesis of the answers to Evaluation Questions given in the previous section.

(i) Roma civil society in FYROM, along with mainstream civil society in the country, works on an agenda that is largely donor-driven. All NGOs are entirely dependent on donor support, and most funding flows to service provision in education and health. The grantee, RCS, stands aside from this force field, setting and following its own agenda. Its main focus has been Roma women, and on research and advocacy on their behalf, as well as efforts to build and maintain a network of women's NGOs, to bring them greater visibility, and to engage with them in capacity development initiatives. A related concern has been the challenge of engaging with young people, young men as well as young women, and to facilitate their involvement in civic life.

(ii) As a precursor to the comments which follow, it should be borne in mind that the UNDEF budget for the project was relatively small (US\$81,000). The grantee accomplished a great deal with the funds provided, but was unable to have long-term impact or produce sustainable results. For all that, given the size of budget, the unfavourable environment in which the project took place, and the massive size of the problem of the unmet needs of the Roma community, the project should be judged a success. Any critical comments on project components in this report must be qualified by an appreciation for the larger picture.

(iii) Through the project, RCS sought to carry forward its agenda, summarized in its strategic plan for 2008-2010, on a broad front. All project components were relevant to the effort to support the democratic inclusion of Roma in the country.

(iv) Everything was managed very professionally, and funds were handled with attention to detail and an eye to frugality throughout.

(v) In view of the limited opportunities to secure alternative funding, it was understandable that RCS sought to draw on the project budget to support a broad range of activities. However, the project strategy was too ambitious and the RCS team attempted to do too much. As a result, several major activities seemed to lack the resources for follow up work which seemed to be necessary.

(vi) All project components, with the possible exception of engendering of the Roma political parties, were well-received by partners and beneficiaries.

(vii) The training curricula and methodologies for delivering the training were very effective in the case of both the youth empowerment initiative and the preparation of young women activists to undertake field research on the situation of Roma women in local communities.

(viii) RCS may have discovered a niche for itself in training young people as a means to supporting their engagement with the public realm. So much more is to be done and it is to be hoped that, in the future, it will attempt to develop, and seek financial support, for a longer-term approach, through which it continues to work with young trainees, both directly and in partnership with other like-minded NGOs.

(ix) The young people who received training appreciated the value of the experience. However, there is a need for follow-up activities to further encourage the young people to apply what has been learned and to obtain further practical experience while “giving back” to their home communities through cooperation with local or national NGOs. It might be noted that, in two cases, the cooperation between local Roma NGOs and groups of trainees in the organization of a “local action” following the training has resulted in longer-term engagement of the young people concerned with the NGO.

(x) The capacity development support program offered to three NGOs was worthwhile, but too short-term in its duration. It did make a difference for all three organizations supported. Within the limitations of time and resources available for the planned activities, it was imaginative and effective. It is hoped that the experience will provide a basis for a longer-term plan for the strengthening of women’s NGOs, or NGOs focusing on women’s issues.

(xi) The project experienced difficulties in finding the anticipated number of applicants for its training programs, indicating that there is a real challenge in reaching out to young people. It is apparent that different approaches will be needed to reach those who seem uninterested in participating in public activities, and who may be distrustful of efforts to encourage them to do so. RCS, in cooperation with other organizations with relevant experience and interests - for example, AMBRELA and SOS Roma - seems to be well-positioned (resources permitting) to take a lead in undertaking further action in this sphere.

(xii) In the case of the plan to select and train young women activists to act as facilitators during the NGO capacity development component of the project, there seem to have been problems with the scope of coverage of the universe of potential applicants. The results of training were disappointing, and this serves to emphasize both the challenge to find the right applicants and the difficulty of encouraging and supporting young Roma in building their self-confidence and taking an active role in public activities.

(xiii) In two of its components, the project seemed to be fighting an uphill battle to get the attention of potential partners. The first component concerned Roma political parties, and, the second, municipal government and cooperation with the Equality Commissions. In both cases, results were disappointing. While it was worthwhile to make the effort to engage with these partners, whose role, in each case, is of some importance for Roma women and recognition of their needs, it is apparent that further investment in initiatives of this kind would be inadvisable under current conditions. It is understood that, at the time the project was first planned, a different party coalition was in power and there were stronger prospects for progress on both fronts.

(xiv) The difficulties encountered in the initiative to strengthen attention to gender equality in the programs of Roma political parties highlight the absence of effective political representation of Roma and their interests in a “patron-client” political system, where parties do a poor job of representing the priorities of their constituencies or of responding to their concerns. The parties saw no benefits in opening themselves to cooperation with an NGO which it did not trust.

(xv) As to municipal government, there seems to be little interest in committing resources to Roma issues and Roma tend to be invisible in local decision-making. The work supported by the project in two of the three municipalities was worthwhile, but had no impact in changing the disposition of local government towards Roma and Roma women’s organizations.

(xvi) The initiative to train young women activists to undertake research on the socio-economic conditions of Roma women across the age range in local communities was

effective both in terms of the training and the value and relevance of the data collected. Working with two partners, RCS was responsible for the development of the Shadow CEDAW Report on FYROM in 2005, submitted to the UN CEDAW Committee. The document is regarded as highly credible and is widely used by both domestic and international organizations. It is also an effective advocacy tool. The new data will be used in compilation of the next Shadow CEDAW Report, due later this year.

(xvii) By supporting RCS in the project, UNDEF was providing resources to an under-funded area and supporting the effort to facilitate the democratic inclusion of a highly-marginalized minority group. The particular attention to Roma women was important, since this is a group whose interests are particularly poorly-served by public programs, and which often lacks voice in its own community. The project was a very close fit with UNDEF priorities concerning minorities and democratic inclusion. Projects of this kind deserve the attention of UNDEF, since they tend not to fit with the priorities of most other donor organizations.

VI. Recommendations

(i) RCS is to be commended for both its commitment to Roma women and youth and for the imagination of its planning and conceptualization of new initiatives. Its diligence and care in project and budget management is also noteworthy. It is recommended, however, that in future funding proposals more attention be given to ensuring the full budgeting of project components, to allow for longer-term engagement with partners and beneficiaries.

(ii) There was a lack of continuity and follow-up in some areas of project work. This suggests that the project tried to include too many elements within a single project with limited resources. In the future, it is recommended that RCS be prepared to make some difficult choices in determining priorities, in order to ensure that adequate resources (including management time) are assigned to all project resources

(iii) The effort by RCS to train young women to play an active role in supporting project activities was an important one, if not always successful. It is recommended that RCS examine the lessons of its experience to date and refine its approach, while continuing with this valuable work. It is also recommended that thought be given to ways of maintaining contact with all the young women who were involved as trainees, including those who were less successful in the training.

(iv) It is essential that RCS finds ways to stay in contact with young people with whom it has worked. They are a precious asset. Hence, it is recommended that RCS consider how best it can provide further support to trainees who have participated in its various short-term training programs, such as those supported in this project. One modest step forward, which is recommended here, would be the establishment of an internet-based youth network. This would facilitate communication among young people who have been involved in training programs, allow RCS and others to post notices and share news, while also providing a forum in which ideas for new initiatives can be put forward and explored.

(v) It is recommended that UNDEF consider projects which support the democratic inclusion of Roma in public life in FYROM and elsewhere in Central and SE

Europe as a high priority. Projects focusing on Roma women and Roma youth deserve particular attention.

(vi) Should UNDEF reconsider its policy of not renewing funding for grantees, RCS would be a worthy recipient of a further grant.

VII. Overall assessment and closing thoughts

RCS is an unusual organization. It is small and compact, and operates from the most moderate facilities, and has a core budget of a size to match its facilities. Yet it has considerable reach within Roma civil society, particularly with Roma women, and more broadly within “mainstream” civil society in FYROM, and in European Roma networks. It also has real credibility, and it is the organization the Ministry of Social Affairs turns to for input on Roma women’s issues. Much of this is due to the talents of its Director. However, she has built a capable team, whose professionalism and practical knowledge was quite evident in the project, in terms of both management and its substantive contribution.

RCS has a special role to play in supporting Roma women and their organizations, along with a strong concern for the necessity of getting young people involved and active in addressing the problems of their communities. While there are donor funds available for civil society organizations in FYROM to work with Roma in service provision, especially in education and healthcare, the scope and depth of the needs to be served are enormous. Little money is available to support initiatives to facilitate the active engagement of Roma with the democratic process, particularly at local level.

VIII ANNEXES

Annex 1: Evaluation Questions

DAC criterion	Evaluation Question	Related sub-questions
Relevance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent was the project, as designed and implemented, suited to context and needs at the beneficiary, local, and national levels? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Were the objectives of the project in line with the needs and priorities for democratic development, given the context? Should another project strategy have been preferred rather than the one implemented to better reflect those needs, priorities, and context? Why? Were risks appropriately identified by the projects? How appropriate are/were the strategies developed to deal with identified risks? Was the project overly risk-averse?
Effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent was the project, as implemented, able to achieve objectives and goals? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent have the project's objectives been reached? To what extent was the project implemented as envisaged by the project document? If not, why not? Were the project activities adequate to make progress towards the project objectives? What has the project achieved? Where it failed to meet the outputs identified in the project document, why was this?
Efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent was there a reasonable relationship between resources expended and project impacts? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Was there a reasonable relationship between project inputs and project outputs? Did institutional arrangements promote cost-effectiveness and accountability? Was the budget designed, and then implemented, in a way that enabled the project to meet its objectives?
Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent has the project put in place processes and procedures supporting the role of civil society in contributing to democratization, or to direct promotion of democracy? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent has/have the realization of the project objective(s) and project outcomes had an impact on the specific problem the project aimed to address? Have the targeted beneficiaries experienced tangible impacts? Which were positive; which were negative? To what extent has the project caused changes and effects, positive and negative, foreseen and unforeseen, on democratization? Is the project likely to have a catalytic effect? How? Why? Examples?
Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent has the project, as designed and implemented, created what is likely to be a continuing impetus towards democratic development? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent has the project established processes and systems that are likely to support continued impact? Are the involved parties willing and able to continue the project activities on their own (where applicable)?
UNDEF value added	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent was UNDEF able to take advantage of its unique position and comparative advantage to achieve results that could not have been achieved had support come from other donors? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What was UNDEF able to accomplish, through the project, that could not as well have been achieved by alternative projects, other donors, or other stakeholders (Government, NGOs, etc). Did project design and implementing modalities exploit UNDEF's comparative advantage in the form of an explicit mandate to focus on democratization issues?

Annex 2: Documents Reviewed

Project Documents

UDF-MAC-07-196 Project document, August 14, 2008
UDF-MAC-07-196 Periodical Progress Report, May 2009
UDF-MAC-07-196 Mid-term Report, November 1, 2009
UDF-MAC-07-196 Final Narrative Report, January 31, 2011
Because it Matters: Empowerment of Women in Political Parties, September 2010
Reports on Training for Young Leaders, April-August, 2009.

General Reference Documents

Measures to Promote the Situation of Roma EU Citizens in the European Union, European Parliament, Directorate General for Internal Policies, Policy Department C: Citizens' Rights and Constitutional Affairs, PE 432.747, 2011.

No Data, No Progress: Data Collection in Countries Participating in the Decade of Roma Inclusion, NY and Budapest, Open Society Foundations (Soros), Roma Initiatives, June 2010.

OSCE (2010) Status Report, Implementation of the Action Plan on Improving the Situation of Roma and Sinti within OSCE Area.

UNDP (2006): At Risk: Roma and the Displaced in Southeast Europe

Documents Relating to FYROM

1. Roma Decade Watch Report Update 2010
2. Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, www.mtsp.gov.mk (Macedonian only)
3. Report on the Situation of Roma in the FYR of Macedonia: Housing and Health, HDZR Mesecina, MCIC and USAID, January 2008
4. Strategy for Roma in the FYR of Macedonia, 2005
5. Joint Submission, Shadow Report On the Situation of Romani Women In the FYR of Macedonia, Oct-Nov 2005
6. UNDP (2006) National Vulnerability Report for Macedonia. <http://vulnerability.undp.sk>
7. REF (2007) Advancing Education of Roma in Macedonia
8. RCS, European Roma Rights Centre, Network Women's Program, Joint Submission to UN Committee on CEDAW (February 2006).

Annex 3: Persons Interviewed

	NAME	ORGANISATION
1.	Azbija Memedova	Roma Center of Skopje (RCS)
2.	Songul Shaban	RCS
3.	Fetija Demirovska	RCS
4.	Suzana Shabanovska	RCS
5.	Silvana Angelevska	Equal Opportunity Commission in Bitola
6.	Violeta Nalevska	Equal Opportunity Coordinator
7.	Ljiljana Kuzmanovska	Equal Opportunity Commission in Bitola
8.	Edije Ali	RCS coordinator for Bitola
9.	Irena Shterjovska	Equal Opportunity Commission in Prilep
10.	Dzejlan Sherifoska	NGO SOS -Prilep
11.	Julijana Anteleska	NGO SOS -Prilep
12.	Tanje Trenkoska	NGO SOS-Prilep
13.	Nesime Salioska	NGO SOS and RCS coordinator for Prilep
14.	Nedime Alijeska	Youth Initiative-Prilep
15.	Kamil Mamudovski	Youth Initiative-Prilep
16.	Erol Asanoski	Youth Initiative-Prilep
17.	Salioska Sibel	Youth Initiative-Prilep
18.	Sanida Tahiri	Youth initiative beneficiaries-Gostivar
19.	Arijeta Tahiri	Youth initiative beneficiaries-Gostivar
20.	Erol Uka	Youth initiative beneficiaries-Gostivar
21.	Veli Tahiri	Youth initiative coordinator-Gostivar
22.	Elizabeta Markovska Spasenoska	Youth initiative trainer-Gostivar
23.	Dimitar Spasenoski	Youth initiative trainer-Gostivar
24.	Minever Skenderi	NGO ZAR--Gostivar
25.	Imerzhat Toci	NGO ZAR--Gostivar
26.	Djulfer Toci	NGO ZAR-Gostivar
27.	Isna Tonci	NGO ZAR-Gostivar
28.	Ajsel Memet	NGO support trainer
29.	Ramco Kundevski	NGO support trainer
30.	Mirdita Saliu	MLSP-Head of the Sector for Equal Opportunities
31.	Lence Kocevaska	MLSP-Legal Representative for Equal Opportunities
32.	Dierdre Boyd	UN Resident Coordinator in FYROM
33.	Vesna Bishevaska	UNDP
34.	Ljatife Shikovska	NGO Ambrela
35.	Aida Mustafovska	NGO Ambrela
36.	Mibera Demirovska	NGO KHAM-Kumanovo
37.	Elena Antevska	NGO KHAM-Kumanovo
38.	Milan Demirovski	NGO KHAM-Kumanovo
39.	Elizabeta Dautovska	NGO KHAM-Kumanovo
40.	Ashmed Elezovski	NGO National Roma Centrum-Kumanovo
41.	Sebihana Skenderovska	NGO National Roma Centrum-Kumanovo
42.	Deniz Mehmeti	Youth Initiative-Kumanovo
43.	Djeniz Sulejmani	Youth Initiative-Kumanovo

Annex 4: List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

AMBRELA	The Centre for social integration and empowerment of the Romani population
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
ERRC	European Roma Rights Centre
EU	European Union
FYROM	Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GE	Gender Equality
KHAM	Roma Humanitarian Association for Women
MCIC	Macedonian Center for International Cooperation
MLSP	Ministry of Labor and Social Policy
NGO	Non-Government Organization
OFA	Ohrid Framework Agreement
OSI	Open Society Institute
RCS	Roma Centre of Skopje
REF	Roma Education Fund
SOS Roma	Roma Organization for Multicultural Association
UN	United Nations
UNDEF	United Nations Democracy Fund
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
ZAR	The Women’s Development Association