



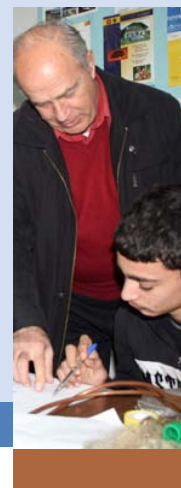
United Nations
ALBANIA

Empowering Vulnerable Local Communities of Albania A ONE UN JOINT PROGRAMME

This programme is funded by the UN Trust Fund for Human Security with the support of the Government of Japan

Newsletter Issue No. 1

November 2010



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Photo: The signing ceremony of the One UN Joint Programme Empowering Vulnerable Local Communities of Albania took place on 8 April 2010, International Roma Day.

Dear partners and friends,

We are delighted to bring to you the first edition of the Empowering Vulnerable Local Communities of Albania newsletter. Inside, you can read various news and stories related to the programme's work to improve the human security and access to socio-economic and civic rights for Roma and Egyptians in the regions of Tirana, Durres, Elbasan and Fier.

UN in Albania scales up its support to Roma community with new joint programme

In July, the United Nations launched the One UN Joint Programme Empowering Vulnerable Local Communities of Albania. The new programme seeks to assist the most marginalized Roma and Egyptian communities and contribute to their social integration while valuing their diversity. It supports the participation of vulnerable communities in local decision-making - through the identification of development priorities and the preparation of community development plans and the implementation of development works.

Assistance enables targeted communities to access their rights, particularly to access to public services through civil registration; community policing to establish and strengthen a network of Roma mediators in areas of health, education, and child protection as well facilitating vocational training and employment in the regions of Tirana, Durres, Elbasan and Fier.

The programme is being implemented by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA); while the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is providing advisory support in the area of civil registration. The programme also involves United Nations Volunteers (UNVs), who work with other programme personnel to implement programme activities and promote volunteerism among citizens. The intervention will last for 3 years and has a total budget of 2.7 million US Dollars, with funding from the United Nations Human Security Trust Fund, financed by the Government of Japan.

Practice areas of the One UN Joint Programme

Community mobilization and infrastructure development

- Since the inception of the joint programme, UNDP has been supporting the formation of 10 community counseling groups in Tirana, Durres, Elbasan and Fier. Together with the groups' members, UNDP has organized four awareness raising activities on community mobilization in Tirana and Durres. In addition, UNDP is assisting communities to identify their priorities for infrastructure development in consultation with local government.

Minority friendly employment services - UNDP is assisting community counseling groups to identify and raise awareness among young Roma and Egyptians of the importance of vocational training. In addition, trainings to raise awareness on the situation of marginalized Roma and Egyptians will be offered to the staff of the Regional Employment Office and Vocational Training Centre. UNDP is set to facilitate the transition to gainful employment for individuals who have completed vocational training through referrals to potential employers in addition to on-the-job training undertaken as part of vocational training courses to link students with formal employment.

Community policing - Community policing is set to be undertaken in order to improve the relationship between the police and Roma and Egyptian communities to strengthen the personal security of vulnerable groups. UNDP is set to identify and train police mediators from Roma and Egyptian communities to act as intermediaries between community members and the local police force. Trained police mediators from local Roma and Egyptian communities will guide community members on addressing problems of discrimination, to report claims and to ask for police services when needed.

Civil registration - Under the guidance of UNHCR, UNDP and UNICEF are collaborating with selected legal support organizations to assist Roma and Egyptian families to register with the relevant public authorities. This is being combined with awareness raising activities for communities and public officials. The programme will not only focus on registration related to the civil registry (birth, marriage, divorce, death, etc), but will also facilitate local community members to register and receive due documentation in order to access state social assistance programmes, unemployment benefits and health insurance. UNICEF, focusing on birth registration, supports mobile registration teams and has referred 30 cases to the court to date.

Maternal child health - UNICEF contributes to improved access to basic maternal child health services (immunization, growth monitoring, nutrition advice, ante-natal care) for Roma and Egyptians through outreach activities. 30 health workers from Tirana Public Health Department were trained from 10 polyclinics in Tirana; 5 Roma health mediators were involved in this process; 590 Roma families were involved in door to door screening; 1,222 children were contacted; while 636 children were identified as lacking vaccination documents.

Child protection - UNICEF supported the establishment of a multifunctional centre in Tirana that became operational in October. In addition, UNICEF is assisting the creation of child protection units in Tirana Municipal Unit No.7 which are due to be launched at the end of November. Child protection units will be staffed by qualified psychologists and social workers, who are able to identify, refer and support Roma/Egyptian children and families most at risk. The multifunctional centre and child protection units will be permanent structures of the Municipality of Tirana providing a safe environment to support and integrate children who have experienced violence, abuse, neglect or any form of exploitation within the family or elsewhere.

Pre-school education - UNICEF is promoting increased access to quality preschool education for Roma children who do not have access to early learning through activities that prepare children for school as well as working with parents through dedicated parenting programmes. Preparatory courses and follow up trainings have begun in Elbasan (Rapishta) and Durres (Keneta). Two kindergartens and parenting programmes have been established to date, while health checkups have been undertaken for 34 children in Fier (Baltez) and 50 children in Saver (Lushnja).

Community healthcare - UNFPA has started to identify the training needs of service providers and communities. Specific training will be provided to doctors and nurses in primary health care. The assessment will also identify the knowledge needs among community counseling groups who will be identified or contacted through NGO's working with Roma communities and also through the support of UNV. Once the findings and conclusions of the assessment are reached, the preparation by trainers of a training curriculum for medical staff in the areas of reproductive health; adolescent sexual and reproductive health will be undertaken.

Social inclusion agenda takes centre stage at International Summer University in Vlore

Staff from the joint programme joined the International Summer University in Vlore on 22 September for the ninth session, organized by the KRILK-Albania Association. The activities of the International Summer University this year have included a focus on the promotion, involvement and participation of young people in public life as well as in the field of human rights and gender equality. The week long programme was undertaken thanks to the support of the joint programme and other international organizations and non-governmental organizations.

A presentation by the joint programme focused on the UN's work to advance the social inclusion of vulnerable groups, highly stimulating the interest of the thirty-six participants. Students were gathered from the neighbouring countries of Kosovo, Serbia, Turkey, Poland, Bosnia Herzegovina; and came from a variety of background within civil society, academic, legal institutions and non-governmental organizations. Following the presentation further discussions were held on the role and challenges of UN agencies in Albania in the protection of vulnerable and marginalized groups in the context of the global financial crisis.

The participants were also joined by two members of the Roma Community in Albania, Esjona and Klaudia who joined the workshop with the support of the joint programme. Staying one week in Vlore proved to be an eye opening experience for these two Roma women, providing an opportunity to share experiences with the other participants. Speaking after the workshop, Esjona highlighted: "We found the lectures both interesting and challenging. It was an opportunity to broaden our understanding of social issues, and gave us an insight into the development of our future careers and university studies."

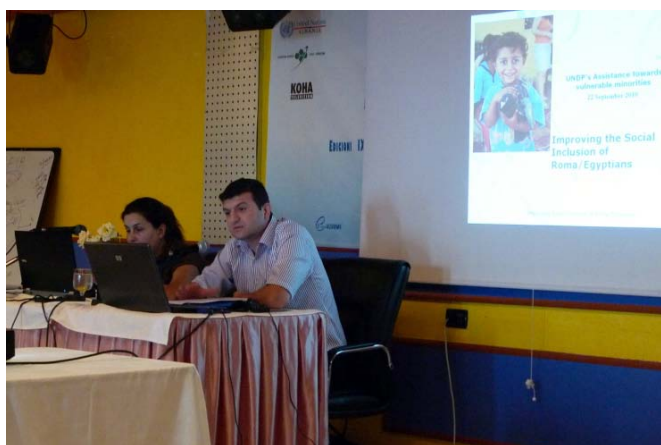


Photo: Bujar Taho, EVLC National Programme Manager at the International Summer University in Vlore.



Photo: Representatives of Roma and Egyptian NGOs in discussion at the Tirana International Hotel.

Roma and Egyptian NGOs come together around issues of common concern

On 6 October the joint programme organized a consultative meeting with Roma and Egyptian NGOs at the Tirana International Hotel. The event provided an opportunity to present an overview of the newly launched joint programme, and collect feedbacks on programme priorities for 2013 to 2017. Divided into four groups during a participatory workshop participants discussed and presented options for government interventions in the area of social inclusion; the role of civil society; and the current focus of international organizations in the areas of education, employment, housing and infrastructure and health.

One of the Roma NGO members highlighted: "I want to congratulate the start of the EVLC programme and express my thanks to the UN agencies working in this area. This is an important occasion for Roma and Egyptians to come together and collaborate with the Albanian Government and UN agencies. In this sense, this is a meaningful moment where we have been able to actively participate in discussions to mainstream the issue of vulnerable groups."

Anti-Poverty Week

Roma children benefit from new community skills

As part of community led activities to mark 17 October, International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, four graduates from a UN sponsored vocational training course, put their tailoring skills to use in the community; making school uniforms for twenty local children with the support of parents and community members. The Day serves to acknowledge the efforts and struggles of people living in poverty, a chance to make their concerns heard, and a moment to recognize that underprivileged people are the first line in the fight against poverty.



Photo: Hatixhe, Fatmira, Dorina and Albana took the initiatives to work for 3 days to tailor 15 school uniforms.

The construction of a new school in Breglumi neighborhood in Tirana has raised new hopes and aspirations for education among Roma and Egyptian children and parents. While working to meet their basic needs, many parents had struggled to provide the necessary equipment and uniforms required as part of school enrollment. In light of this, 15 Roma and Egyptian pupils from the neediest families were equipped with school uniforms thanks to the voluntary efforts of other community members. Alesia Sula, one of the pupils to benefit from the activity, commented: "I'm really happy for this uniform, I like it very much. Now I will feel equal to my classmates. Thank you very much. I promise I will work hard at school."

The initiative provided an opportunity to promote the importance of local empowerment in efforts to overcome the challenges and poverty and social exclusion; the value of vocational training as a tool to find decent work opportunities and the importance of school enrolment in improving life choices for young people. The 2010 Anti-Poverty Week comes at a time when people living in poverty, especially Roma and Egyptians in Albania are even more uncertain about employment stability, working conditions, training opportunities and the availability of social protection.

Book reading in Fushe Kruja

As a warm-up to a book reading activity in Fushe Kruja, Durres the film Peter Pan was screened for 200 children, including those from the Roma/Egyptian community in the municipal cultural center, thanks for the support of the Mayor of Fushe Kruja, members of the local Community Counseling Group and the Roma NGOs Romano Drom and Amaro Drom. A few days later, 70 children from the Roma/Egyptian community were invited by local government officials from the Municipality of Fushe Kruja for a reading of the book Peter Pan at the community

primary school. The activity provided an important opportunity to place children at the centre of local development, while encouraging the strengthening of links between representatives of local authorities and representatives of the Roma and Egyptian community.

Environmental regeneration in Nishtulla, Durres

Another activity that took place in Durres was a neighbourhood cleaning in the district of Nishtulla. 70 Roma children and adults were provided with plastic gloves and sacks by UNDP, and worked to regenerate two neighbourhoods. The event provided an opportunity to promote within the community the value of working together towards resolving issues of mutual concern. Klara Xhaibra and Vera Zeqiri were the two key volunteers that together with the programme staff organized the cleaning groups in their respective neighbourhoods.



Photo: Local children taking part in the environmental regeneration activity in Nishtulla, Durres.

Essay competition launched among university students in Tirana

To mark the International Day for Eradication of Poverty on 17 October, the joint programme launched a call for applications for an essay competition amongst university students in Tirana. The competition aims to make university students more aware of the social inclusion issue through encouraging them to enhance their research skills and intellectual logical thinking. During a meeting to officially launch the activity, some 150 students were in attendance. An award ceremony for the winning students will take place on Human Rights Day, December 10.

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