

Addressing Forced Marriage in Roma Communities

Location: Antwerp, Belgium

Period: 2012-2025

Why?

- Roma have a long history of experiencing discrimination, persecution and exclusion. They are highly marginalized.
- Furthermore, girls are forced into marriages at a very young age, leading to domestic abuse, mental problems and physical problems (early pregnancies).

What?

- Roma mediators build bridges between Roma communities and the societies where they live in order to empower Roma and increase their participation in society.

How?

- The National Roma Strategy facilitated the financing of the project. Roma mediation encourages constructive interaction between health systems (doctors, hospitals, mental health care), educational systems (teachers, school, educational assistants), housing (house owners, social housing), work (work programs) and Roma. The mediators encourage Roma to participate positively in society.
- Mediators are active in this city. Outside of the city, they are recognized as specialists and offer consultation and training on the subject of 'working with Roma' to other cities.
- Some of the mediators are women from the Roma communities who were also forced into marriage. They can communicate well with other young girls from the community, who feel safe to talk and learn about other opportunities.
- They conduct activities in three different levels:
 - Case/Individual: Engagement and negotiations. Use of specific methodology. Coaching and consult with partners: police, welfare organisations, schools
 - Prevention: Activities with girls, workshops in schools
 - Policy: Awareness

Impact

- Through a better participation in surrounding societies, through better education, better housing, better access to healthcare etc., the future generations of Roma can benefit of the outcomes of the project. As communities they will continue to reap the benefits of the project.

Transferable tools and strategies

- Structural:
 - Efforts to change policies or laws: Awareness about the problem for policy changes
- Participatory:
 - Encouraging group participation in decision-making, by integrating group representatives in governance: Third party representatives are part of the underserved group/ community, understanding the issues and being able to communicate properly with the young girls.
- Distributional:
 - Targeted approaches addressing historical inequities relating to specific groups of people: Different approaches to address the problem, going from case/individual level, to presentation and policy level
- Intergenerational:
 - Efforts to enshrine long-term health, well-being and sustainable development goals: Activities with girls, workshops in schools for towards cultural change to prevent forced marriage

Resources



Bright Spot Recording



Deep Dive

Slide Deck



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