Building Capacity for the Health of Europe’s Roma Communities

Second Conference on Migrant Health in Europe
Malmö, Sweden – 22 May 2008

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The International Organization for Migration (IOM) is...

- Intergovernmental organization
- HQ in Geneva and EU Liaison/Representation in Brussels
- 122 Member States
- >400 field locations globally
- Some 5500 employees working on >1600 projects
- Committed to the principle that humane and orderly migration benefits migrants and societies

Migration Health Department: Promote the health of migrants and mobile populations; advise states and partners
MIGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT
FACILITATING MIGRATION
REGULATING MIGRATION
FORCED MIGRATION

Technical Cooperation & Capacity Building
Migrants’ Rights & International Migration Law
Data & Research
Policy Debate & Guidance
Regional & International Cooperation
Public Information & Education
MIGRATION HEALTH
Gender Dimension
Integration & Reintegration
Examples of IOM’s work with Roma

- Facilitating access to social and health services (Central Europe)
- Roma business cooperatives (Poland)
- Humanitarian and Social Assistance Programme (worldwide)
- Employment assistance, and community stabilization (support to livelihoods, income generation through small and microenterprises etc.) in disadvantaged Roma communities (Kosovo)
- Support services to improve employability of Roma (Greece)
- Labour market training to mitigate emigration pressures (Slovakia)
- Training for engagement of Roma women in civil society (South-eastern Europe)
- Counter-trafficking (e.g. in Macedonia)
- Documentary interviews with Roma Holocaust survivors (Baltic States, Macedonia (FYROM), Moldova)
Challenges in Roma Access to Healthcare

- Est. 8-10 million Roma in Europe
- Little information on Roma health status, in particular on non-communicable diseases
- Estimated Roma live about 10 years less than majority populations
- Research shows that Roma living conditions and health access have worsened in the last 20 years
- They are like migrants in their home country
Key Barriers and Health Inequalities faced by Roma

- Persistent poverty and social exclusion
- Lack of documentation
- Discrimination in national health policies and healthcare facilities
- Lower vaccination rates and higher prevalence of communicable disease than majority populations
- Low health awareness and unhealthy behaviours
Building Healthy Roma Communities Project

Funded by the Government of the Kingdom of Belgium

Partners: Resource Centre for Roma Communities (Romania), ETP Slovakia, and Gandhi Foundation (Hungary)
**Aims: Building Healthy Roma Communities Project**

- Build human capacity to deal effectively with minority group needs, reduce discrimination and support Roma access to health social services
- Provide opportunities for exchange and learning
- Pilot a community assistance model

**Target Countries:** Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovakia
Building Healthy Roma Communities Project

Phase I (Dec 2005 – Nov 2006)
- Assembly of international expert team (Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovakia)
- Development of training curriculum and manual
- International training of trainers course in Poland

Phase II (Dec 2006 – Feb 2008):
- 4 country-level training courses: Hungary, Poland, Romania and Slovakia
- Pilot Equality Support Unit to encourage self-help and community-based health promotion (Negresti, Romania)
Training Objectives:

• To train practitioners from a variety of professional backgrounds who actively work with Roma communities
• To promote and support (trans)national exchange and mutual learning
• To empower Roma activists with knowledge and skills to act in their communities to ensure inclusion
• To build a core group of local practitioners able to initiate and support the implementation of community-level assistance
Cluj Napoca, Romania 3-8 July 2007

Levoca, Slovakia 14-19 October 2007
Training Curriculum

1. Roma in Europe: An Overview
2. Health Promotion and Assistance
3. Social Exclusion
4. Education
5. Participatory Community Development
6. Human Rights Protection for Minorities
7. Leadership Development
8. Group work to develop a project proposal
Results of Pilot Training

- 15 trainers certified in September 2006
- Training manual translated into 5 languages: Hungarian, Polish, Romani, Romanian and Slovak
- 77 trainees took part in 4 courses in target countries in 2007
- Diverse trainees: Roma/non-Roma, activists, government officials, health mediators, educators, students
- Average course evaluation of 4.6/5
Pilot Equality Support Unit
Negresti, Romania
The main objective of the ESU is to act as a mediator between Roma and majority populations and local/regional government authorities. The ESU provides information, awareness-raising tools, expert advice on health issues, and a forum for discussion.
Results of Pilot ESU

- Customer satisfaction survey of 200 households (approx. 1000 Roma) rated ESU services well
- Cooperation with partner, Resource Centre for Roma Communities (RCRC), to expand and seek funding for activities beyond six-month pilot phase
- Team visit to ESU in February 2008 showed success of multi-stakeholder engagement
- Head of Equality Support Unit engaged as health mediator on the payroll of county authorities
- ESU office space donated by local authorities to the Roma association in Negresti, Romania
Project Lessons Learned

- Training in Poland was the final and most successful in terms of both trainer and trainee feedback. Lessons on recruitment and trainer preparation can be drawn:
  - Application process for training requires careful planning, personal commitment and enthusiasm of the coordinators
  - Trainer skills and confidence need to be developed, also for those active in Roma issues
- Though trainers adapted materials for the country, more time and resources should be allocated for such needs-based adaptation
- Where possible, training courses should include not only a wide variety of materials and media, but also site visits to Roma settlements and discussions with local social assistants
- ESU surveys indicate that priorities in Negresti are increasing health knowledge among Roma, increasing access to medical services and building trust with family doctors
Challenges and Next Steps

- Funding for European initiatives targeting the improvement of Roma health as well as funding for community-level health projects
- Revise and better adapt curriculum to suit needs in individual countries
- Expand training outreach within and beyond countries targeted by the Project
- Foster deeper cooperation between governmental and non-governmental actors engaged in Roma health
- Develop support structure for international and national-level sharing of information and good practices on Roma health issues
Thank you!