

MEETING INFORMATION  
ROMA INTEGRATION EMERGENCY RESPONSE MEETINGS TO COVID-19  
**BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA**

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**Date:** 15<sup>th</sup> April 2020, 1<sup>st</sup> informative meeting

**Organized by:** Roma Integration 2020 Regional Cooperation Council (RCC RI2020)

**Attendees:** 1.EU Commission 2.EU Delegation 3.Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees/NRCP 4.Committee on Roma at the Council of Ministers of BiH 5.RCC RI2020 team 6.Open Society Foundations 7.Romacted 8.REF 9.OSCE 10.UNICEF 11.CARITAS 12.World Vision 13.CARE 14.Save the children 15.Civil Right Defenders 16.Kali Sara Roma NGO 17.Romalen Kakanj Roma NGO 18.Better Future Roma NGO 19.Portal UDAR

**Technical info:** The meetings are held via the application for online meetings Zoom, lasting 90 minutes for each economy. The Policy Expert is responsible to coordinate the organisation of the meeting with the National Roma Contact Point (NRCP), from the economy and invite participants, limited to 100.

**Objective:** The current situation of Covid-19 pandemic urged the governments in the region to undertake a number of overarching measures. Both the pandemic and the measures significantly influence the Roma communities in the region. In such situation the governments, and accordingly the Roma Integration 2020, need to adjust to the circumstance in performing their mandate for the best possible outcome for RE within the given possibilities. Hence, the Roma Integration 2020 action, in consultation with the European Union and the Open Society Foundations, finds it necessary to facilitate a broad societal dialogue regarding the response to the Covid-19 crisis and its consequences to the Roma community in order to ensure broad needs assessment, proper short, medium and long term response, and adequate consideration of Roma in the mainstream measures.

#### INITIAL ASSESSMENT OF THE SITUATION OF ROMA IN BiH

### 1. Overview of existing measures taken at national and EU level for the most vulnerable Roma

#### Government/NRCP:

- Having in mind all the procurement procedures, the Ministry of Human Rights and Refugees (MHRR) is trying to allocate funds from their perspective ministry. The budget will be in favour of all vulnerable groups including Roma. Info on budget approval will follow during the next week.
- MHRR tries to join actions with Municipality of Kalesija, to support 2 Roma families who are in need of basic humanitarian aid.
- In line with different local authorities who should agree on equal approach and coordination, the MHRR will develop programs and plans on returnees. For now returnees are not treated differently than the general population and Roma.

#### EU Delegation (EUD):

- The short term responses are directed to support the purchase of medical equipment.
- The IPA programing of 2019/20 is tackling the most vulnerable groups and issues.
- As an urgent respond, requests related to support Roma, are being addressed through Romacted in 10 municipalities as a joint mission of the Council of Europe (CoE) and the EU.
- The Romacted program is ending in April, therefore this issue should be addressed through the Council of Europe to intervene immediately as there is need of constant flow and cooperation.
- Regarding the short term measures support to Roma, **identification of urgent responses is needed.**
- Longer term measures: As the EU 2019/20 programs (IPA) are already tackling vulnerable groups, the vulnerability caused by the situation should be additionally identified.
- From the socio-economy recovery fund, funds will be allocated to stimulate small and medium enterprises. Funds will be doubled for education and employment.
- The Roma vulnerability should be taken in consideration.

### 2. Overview of short term needs

- Municipalities have to identify the community needs, to summarize and provide short term responses and measures. In municipalities without strong Roma organizations, budget allocation should be requested.
- Protective masks, food, medicines and hygienic products.
- Coordination with 40 municipal representatives and local NGOs to define key aid measures.
- Ensuring access to internet, TV and mob app for children in Roma settlements.
- Water and electricity needs in Roma settlements.



### 3. Who does what and coordination of various stakeholders

- Romacted allocated funds and throughout their support organization Romalen from Kakanj, provided food and hygiene vouchers to 315 families when the crisis started.
- Romacted is aligning their activities with the municipalities. In many municipalities yet, the needs of the communities are not identified and there is a need of reactions.
- Municipality of Kakanj has allocated 5.000 KM (2.500 EUR), NGO Romalen distributed the humanitarian aid to the most vulnerable. Thirty packages with basic products were distributed in Municipality of Tuzla and Gradiska.
- Municipality of Center Sarajevo has provided 2 laptops for Roma students and Wi-Fi hotspot in Gorici, the Roma settlement.
- UNFPA - United Nations Population Fund secured 50 hygienic packages for Municipality of Visoko.
- World Vision allocated funds for rice, flour, masks and hygienic products for 1000 families, out of which 300 Roma. The distribution was in coordination with the Roma NGOs Kali Sara, Romalen Kakanj, Euro Rom and Better Future in Tuzla, Jurin in Republic of Srpska.
- REF allocated funds for 230 packages and will provide additional support to education and online learning. Final responses will follow soon.
- NGO Kali Sara with the support of OSF is constantly working on mapping the community needs. Kali Sara compiled a table with data on how many people received humanitarian aid by now. Kali Sara has sent requests to institutions and international donors to fill in information on potential crisis responses, including municipalities. These data are available through Kali Sara.
- The Roma women network Better Future has negotiated with their donors to reallocate non spent funds for direct support of the 5 women network NGOs, 500 EUR per organization. With the support from World Vision, Better Future provided packages for 30 families. Another 130 packages from different donors were distributed in Lukavac and Tuzla where many children with disabilities are living without health insurance.
- Caritas is planning to provide aid packages to serve around 2000 vulnerable Roma and non Roma households in 16 municipalities where projects were implemented. The aid is planned for the next 3 months.
- OSCE has information on access to water and electricity in different municipalities. Update will be done and aligned with the data base of Kali Sara, and shared with the participants. OSCE stands ready to deliver further support in coordination with the MHRR and the Roma NGOs.
- The Open Society BiH will provide food and hygienic packages for around 430 families (NGO EURO Rom).
- Save the children and CARE also contribute to the existing urgencies. Due to lack of time, info will follow in a next meeting.

### 4. Enduring synergies and complementarity

- The MHRR is asking the Roma organizations to get involved and initiate urgent responses that may support the vulnerable Roma.
- Romacted will align synergies with the MHRR and the municipalities.
- NGO Kali Sara received information from the Federal Red Cross on lack of capacities and reliable data to deal with Roma urgencies, as the Red Cross uses lists from social work centres and Roma are not often users of those centres.
- Caritas is preparing an assessment table on info sharing, coordination among various stakeholders and mapping further assistance. Organizations can enter data and can contribute to a google drive table for Roma and non Roma (to be shared with us).
- The Committee on Roma at the Council of Ministers of BiH has compiled a table with information on support provided by municipality and gathered info on urgent needs from the field. Data are aligned with the OSCE and NGO Kali Sara. The Committee is urging usage of this excel table.
- First interventions on the field were initiated by World Vision, Romacted, Kali Sara, latter on several international donors and organizations joined initiatives.

### 5. Proposed targeted and mainstream measures

- The MHRR/NRCP plans to take a lead on data collection of current needs.





- The MHRR/NRCP with Romacted and OSCE will requests from the municipalities to map the needs of the communities and allocate funds.
- The MHRR/NRCP, the RCC RI2020, and the EUD, will discuss the EU funds programing to benefit vulnerable groups and Roma in the post pandemic recovery process.
- The NRCP announced the distribution of humanitarian packages will be trough the Red Cross.
- The Roma NGOs want to discuss their existing lists that consist accurate numbers of Roma families, municipalities and settlements, urgent needs, measures etc. with the MHRR and the Red.

## 6. Follow up actions

### **Follow up with the EUD**

1. With a purpose to ensure Roma are taken into governmental strategic consideration when defining socio-economic post COVID-19 recovery, the NRCP and RCC RI2020 should be in a position to provide short, mid and long term recommendations on financial planning and support of the vulnerable groups, specifically Roma. The identified measures will be discussed with the EU Delegation in order to be programed in the IPA 2019/20 and in the current socio-economic recovery program.

### **Follow up with local authorities**

2. In many municipalities, the needs of the communities are not identified and there is a need of reactions. Identifying urgent community needs, coordination between MHRR, Romacted, OSCE, municipalities and NGOs should be established ASAP.

### **Follow up with the Red Cross**

3. The NRCP will follow up with the local authorities and municipal representatives and ask them to keep track of the aid delivery to Roma. The NRCP and Romacted will discuss how to ensure Roma volunteers join the Red Cross (for accurate field mapping and delivery in Roma settlements).
4. In order to ensure accurate aid distribution for those who need the most, a final beneficiaries' assessment has to be done. Kali Sara and Romalen react on the planned distribution from Red Cross due to lack of data and this should be discussed with all relevant institutions and organizations.

### **Follow up on data collection and data base usage**

5. The MHRR/NRCP will prepare info letter with tasks and responsibilities taken by the ministry and other stakeholders. All organizations are invited to contribute and share information for the sake creating such a data base.
6. Caritas is calling all the organizations to use the google drive table that is already in use, for better coordination of activities, contribution and track keeping of the human needs and donor responses. The type of data will be coordinated with the NRCP. Caritas will provide the link to the table.
7. The Committee on Roma at the Council of Ministers of BiH is urging the usage of the existing data base compiled with Kali Sara and OSCE.

### **Follow up meetings**

8. Meeting with the EUD on identification of short and long term recovery measures that can benefit the vulnerable and Roma;
9. Final agreement on procedures and usage of the existing data base.

