



Roma Child Rights – A Mission Possible

UNICEF Office in Romania

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For every child
Health, Education, Equality, Protection
ADVANCE HUMANITY



Where to start from?

- Assessment of Roma cultural identity issues and sensitivities;
- Assessment of Roma - non-Roma relations;
- Assessment of the situation of Roma communities in what access to basic social services is concerned (convergent approach);
- Assessment of the capacity of Roma NGOs in the field of education, health, social protection, human rights, etc.;
- Assessment of the responsiveness of the social systems' to the Roma communities' specific needs;



Child rights issues

- Low participation in mainstream education
- High drop-out
- Segregation (education, housing, health, etc.)
- Racism (infra-racism and fragmented racism)
- Ethno-centrist dominant approach in the social systems (e.g. of curricular products in education, etc.)
- Inadequate resources (budgetary allocations, human resources, etc.) for the systems to properly respond to the specific needs of Roma communities.
- Inequitable access to basic social services
- Non-conducive community norms for Roma girls



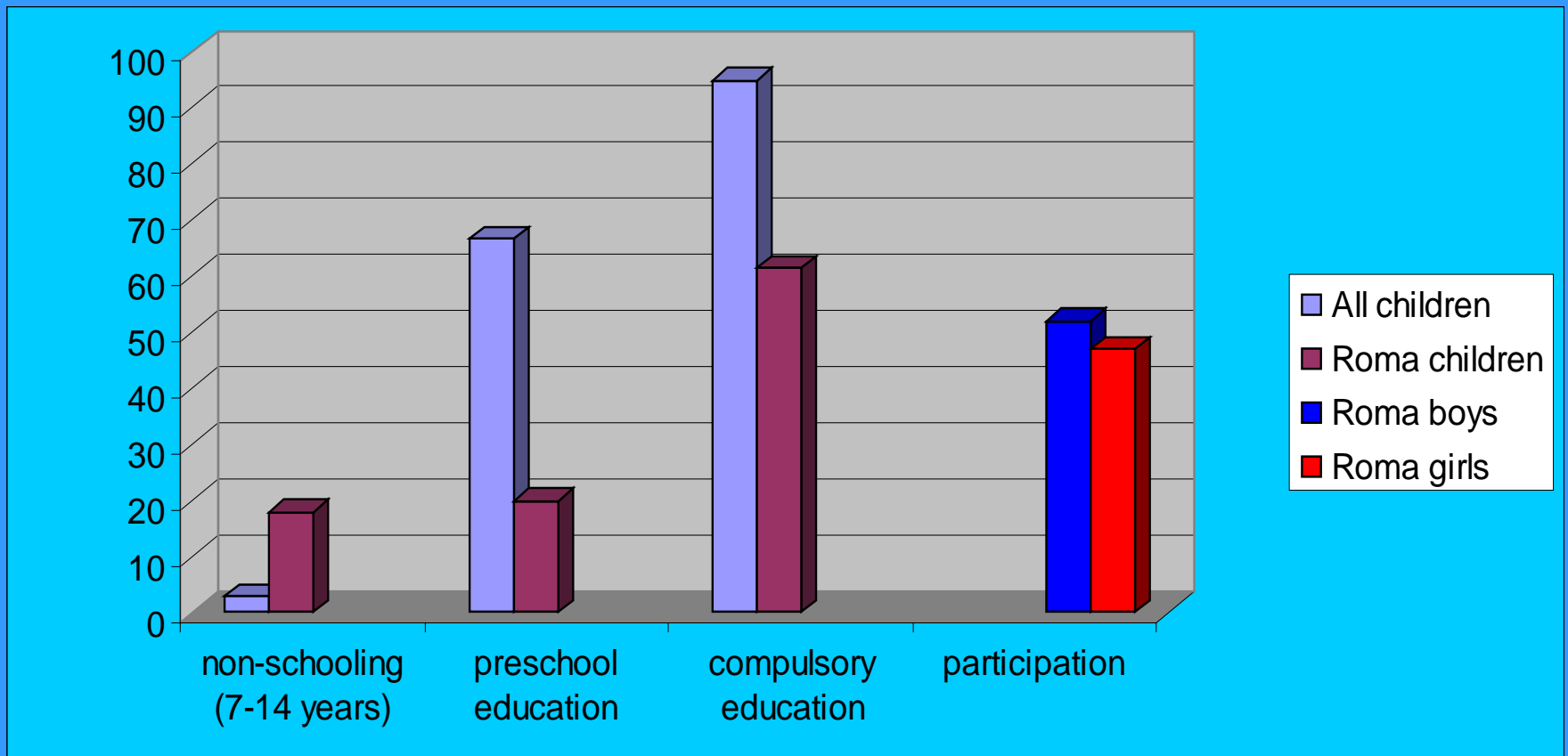
Finding common ground

- Building bridges of trust (involving formal and informal Roma community leaders)
- Key decision making levels involve or set up advisory bodies or structures for assessing, planning and monitoring (central, regional, local level)
- Roma representation is compulsory in such advisory bodies or structures
- Capacity building strategies for Roma NGOs and experts in different structures (dialogue partners)

Keys to success

- Joint identification of issues and joint prioritization (Roma representatives – system representatives)
- Clear objectives in the policy documents for both Roma children and non-Roma children (in mixed underserved communities interventions should target all children, but the specific needs of Roma children, as children belonging to national minorities, should be acknowledged and addressed as such)
- Out-of-the-box solutions (interventions need to go out of any pre-fabricated ideas + “one size” will not fit all the diverse types of Roma communities)

Disparities in education



A possible chart of issues (the case of Romania)

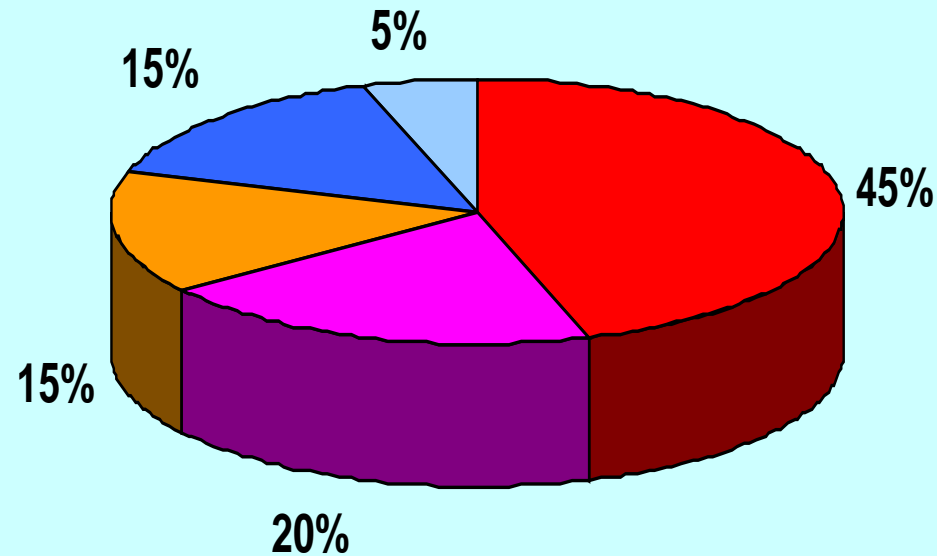
- Racism /
Discrimination/Segregation **45%**

- Rigidity of systems **20%**

- Complete ignorance on Roma
issues **15%**

- Internalization of stigma **15%**

- Non-Conductive Roma
Traditions **5%**



UNICEF Types of Interventions:

- Advocacy - Combating Discrimination
- Evidence-Based Policy Development
- Knowledge Generation
- Leveraging Resources
- Capacity Building
- Community –Based Interventions



Advocacy - Combating Discrimination

- “Leave No Child Out – Discrimination Kills Dreams” Campaign
- Grass-root community campaign on Roma children’s rights
- Roma community campaign on affirmative actions in education
- Development of non-discrimination legislation
- Roma Community Leaders’ Training on Early Pregnancy and Marriage



Evidence-Based Policy Development

(1)

- National Strategy for the Stimulation of Roma Children Participation to Education
- National Strategy for the Development of Human Resources in Early Childhood Development (including a chapter on Roma communities)
- Strategic Partnership between UNICEF and the MoER on Roma Children Education
- Early Learning and Development Standards (chapter on social competencies)

Evidence-Based Policy Development

(2)

- Education Priority Areas Pilot Project (now part of the MoE policies and part of the National Pact on Education)
- Good Start for School Pilot Project (Summer Kindergarten) (now scaled up through the EU Phare Projects)
- Bilingual Kindergarten in Roma Communities (in process of scaling up through the EU Structural Funds)
- Multifunctional ECD Centres (policy approach model approved by the MoE)



Knowledge Generation

(selected examples)

- Research on Roma Children Participation to Education (2002)
- Research on Roma working children (2003)
- Research on socio-cultural determinants for Roma children participation to education (2005)
- Early marriage and early pregnancy in Roma communities (2006, 2007)
- Four educational policy exercises – [one visioning exercise on Roma] (2007)
- Roma in the search of self-esteem (2007)
- Segregation in education (2008)

Leveraging Resources

- Cooperation with the WB Rural Education Project and CoEDB on Early Education
- Cooperation with Roma Education Fund and other Decade partners
- Cooperation with the EU Phare Projects on Roma Children Education (UNICEF has a constant seat in the EU Phare Steering Committees 2003-2009)
- Cooperation with the EU Phare Projects on Policy Impact Analysis (Early Education Strategy 2009)

Capacity Building ⁽¹⁾

- National Program of Intercultural Education
- Academic Training of Roma unqualified teachers
- National Summer Courses of Romany Language and Roma History and Traditions
- Training of Roma Education Mediators
- Training of Roma Health Mediators
- Development of the first manual on Roma History and Traditions, manuals on Romany Language grades 5 -8;

Capacity Building ⁽²⁾

- Development of bi-lingual and tri-lingual educational materials for pre-school and primary education
- Development of educational materials in Romany and Romanian language (e.g. “Roma tears” – an oral history collection of the testimonies of the survivors of Roma Holocaust in Romania)
- National Program of Education for Democratic Citizenship
- Student Ombudsperson



Community – Based Interventions

- Educational Day Centres in the most disadvantaged Roma communities
- Roma Youth Centres
- Child-friendly school initiative in Roma communities
- Roma children preschool education in the Step-by-Step alternative

