

# Community social action

Social groups in risk of or in a situation of exclusion which is the case of the Roma population call for global responses which envisage their advancement in the community environment where they reside, and it is precisely this environment which should serve as the point of departure and intervention resource.

The sort of social action which should be implemented to cover the complex needs of these types of communities is based on the fact that in order to bring about real change, all the issues affecting the social and cultural advancement of people and groups must be addressed, to the degree possible, through the active participation of the beneficiaries.

The FSG has employed this approach in different programmes by promoting these types of integrated actions which have an impact on all of the difficulties faced by the Roma community in the towns or regions where we are working. Our work model includes intervention in different areas:

› **Community empowerment.** Promote constructive co-existence while remaining mindful of the active participation of the members of the community and establishing synergies with public resources and social entities to

“If real change is to be brought about, the social and cultural advancement of individuals and groups should develop through the active participation of their leaders.”

meet the needs expressed or detected in the neighbourhoods/municipalities.

› **Basic services.** Receive and cater to Roma individuals with any type of need providing guidance, accompaniment and training allowing them to gain access to and properly use mainstream services available to all citizens.

› **Housing.** Promote actions which favour access to and use of housing for Roma and improvement of the environment in which they live in terms of infrastructure and co-existence.

› **Educational mainstreaming.** Promote educational processes targeting young Roma which are as standardised as possible: foster school enrolment from an early age, regular school attendance and the acquisition of proper school habits, routines and rules; support compensation resources to make up for educational deficits; discourage early school leavers and encourage the highest possible academic achievement.



CHILDREN HAVE THEIR SAY: “THERE’S ROOM FOR EVERYONE IN THIS BOAT” VILLACAÑAS (TOLEDO)



“THE SAHARA IN THE PLAZA”, GROUP OF WOMEN IN CIUDAD REAL



HELLÍN FOOTBALL TEAM (ALBACETE)

› **Socio-educational actions with Roma youth and children.** Promote programmes designed to stimulate and reinforce their active participation, permanence and competence in the educational system, to promote adequate psycho-social and cultural development and to compensate for the difficulties and risks of exclusion that they face.

› **Advancement of women.** Develop activities targeting Roma women to facilitate their personal and social advancement and their active participation in socio-cultural areas freeing them from their dual marginalisation, i.e. as women and as Roma.

› **Advancement of health and standard of living.** Actions enabling members of the Roma community of all ages facing these deficits to develop good health habits with a focus on prevention and overall improvement of health while stressing access to mainstream health-care services.

› **Basic training for adults.** Devise mechanisms to enhance learning by stimulating life-long social and cultural development.

› **Incorporation into the information society.** Foster the creation and organisation of services to close the digital gap which the Roma community is facing and foster access to and use of new information and communication technologies with a view to guaranteeing their integration into the information society.



› **Cultural promotion and multi-cultural co-existence.** Develop actions leading to the recognition, development and transmission of elements of the Roma culture, providing the society with a more positive image which is a better reflection of reality while also fostering co-existence based on respect and exchange.

The Community Social Action undertaken by the FSG has taken root in different locations throughout Spain although with different degrees of development in the different Autonomous Communities. Of the programmes implemented in this area, the following three merit special mention:

1. The **City of Madrid’s Integrated social intervention agreement with the Roma community** which has paved the way for ongoing work on different lines of action with the Roma community in each district, integrating actions into general services and developing complementary actions as needed in different areas. It has been implemented in five districts of Madrid starting in 1999 (Villaverde, Usera, Carabanchel, Vallecas and Latina); in 2007 there were 9 working teams and over 50 workers dedicating their efforts to its implementation reaching over 10,000 users.

2. **Territorially-based Integrated Service** for social integration work with the Roma community. The aim of this service is to move forward with the work done in the Roma community and make it increasingly holistic by reinforcing social action initiatives in the different municipalities and territories. It is implemented within the framework of the call

for “Works of General and Social Interest” in each Autonomous Community for the purpose of hiring unemployed persons. In 2007, 211 workers participated in this task, accumulating experience in working with the Roma community and, thanks to their training and expertise, they are organising and supporting the programmed community social actions.

### 3. Development and advancement of the Roma community in Castile-La Mancha.

Within the framework of the III Regional Social Integration Plan 2002-2005/2006/2007 (PRIS) implemented by the Castile-La Mancha Regional Government and in response to the needs of one of its priority groups, the Roma community, the FSG implements an action programme in 9 municipalities in coordination with municipal social services thus reinforcing and enhancing use of the said services. In 2007 there were close to 1,400 direct users of these action which had an indirect impact on a further 2,000 people.

And lastly, along the lines of fostering the **incorporation of the Roma community into the information society**, we would highlight two important actions given their potential repercussions:

First of all the *Romi.net* project *Roma Women and New Technologies* funded by the Ministry of Industry, Tourism and Trade within the sphere of the *Avanza* Plan entailing the implementation as from 2006 of a network of 15 services providing access to new technologies for the Roma population, with a special focus on women, throughout the different Autonomous Communities. These classrooms are run by 20 women, most of whom are Roma, who have received specific training on the empowerment of tele-centres and computer classrooms. Their main aim is to foster access to available resources



“HEALTHY BREAKFAST”, ACTIVITIES FOR CHILDREN AND THEIR PARENTS IN CIUDAD REAL

in the sphere of New Technologies to Roma women in their own neighbourhoods and, by extension, to the entire community. These trainer training actions are serving as an *empowerment* mechanism for participants who are adopting a different and more active role in promoting the digital literacy of individuals and organisations. An example is the participation of two of the empowerers in the annual meeting organised by the *Esplai* Foundation in Barcelona targeting telecentre empowerers from all over Spain whose role was to present the *Romi.net* project at one of the experience sharing conferences.

Secondly, with the on-line support of Roma organisations within the framework of the *Programme for the efficient management of organisations through the use of new technologies and quality control* with financial support from the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, FSG actions targeting local and regional Roma organisations are implemented for the specific purpose of supporting and encouraging access to new technologies and training personnel in the use of tools to improve management so that they can more efficiently fulfil their role as social agents. Nine entities took part in 2007 their personnel receiving training in the empowerment and management of classrooms set up to provide access to new technologies (telecentres) and advisory support on the creation and update of web pages to manage, disseminate and promote activities carried out by the entities thus allowing them to take advantage of the benefits that the Internet has to offer in the running of social organisations.