

Prison inmate population

The Fundación Secretariado Gitano focuses on the Roma prison inmate population and their families through this programme.

While the profile of the Roma inmate population changes over time, some important characteristics remain stable such as serious social breakdown, low social and educational level and major difficulties finding work and fitting in to society. This situation is further exacerbated by drug abuse problems and the number of HIV positives among the Roma community.

We therefore find a profile characterised by important social, educational, labour and family deficits as well as health problems. While these characteristics define the profile of these programme users, we must not forget that each inmate has his/her own uniqueness when diagnosing their needs many of which can be summarised in the following points:

- Labour training and access to resources
- Literacy and academic training
- Motivation to partake in training
- Social skills training
- Health education
- Social support, expectations upon leaving prison
- Guidance, information and support in adapting to prison
- Social support for families.


While this profile often coincides with that of the rest of the prison population, it is important to stress Roma cultural differences and the marginalization faced by this community vis-à-vis the rest of the society.

The legal basis for prison treatment is found in Article 25(2) of the Spanish Constitution: “Prison

sentences and security measures shall be oriented towards re-education and social rehabilitation...”. This concept is further developed in Article 1 of the General Penitentiary Organic Law (Spanish acronym LOGP) laying down the principles underlying the treatment of inmates. Proper implementation of this treatment requires the participation of the inmate as also pointed out in the aforementioned General Penitentiary Organic Law (Article 61): “Inmates shall be encouraged to participate in the planning and application of their treatment”; in Article 112 of the Penitentiary Regulation: “Inmates shall be encouraged to take part in the planning and application of their treatment”).

In the case of the Roma inmate community, it is important to focus intervention on making resources more readily available, motivation, accompaniment and anything else to get inmates involved in their own treatment process.

The Fundación Secretariado Gitano attention and advancement programme for Roma minority members in penitentiary centres has been carried out at Madrid V (Soto del Real) since 1995 with financial support from the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs and with the collaboration of the penitentiary

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A series of actions are carried out to achieve the objectives of the programme and are broken down into four areas:

- › Individual; programme users are catered to individually allowing for more personalised and in-depth intervention where intervention is more oriented to education.
- › Group; involving a series of socio-educational workshops to support and reinforce the content dealt with individually with a special accent on socialisation. We also run flamenco workshops, a women's classroom, health, literacy, school support and we publish a magazine called *Nómadas*.
- › Family; this is closely linked to individual attention and is focused on lessening the impact that incarceration has on the inmate's family, on supporting the advancement and development of inmates and their family as well as access to mainstream resources.
- › Coordination; technical coordination is important both on the inside and outside. This is done with treatment teams, social workers, educators, psychologists and staff teams and health-care workers of the penitentiary centre itself. Outside of the prison environment we work with different institutions and organisations such as social services, drug centres, lawyers and with other professionals

having to do with the treatment of prisoners including the Foundation's different programmes and resources, especially primary care and labour market and social integration. In 2007 a total of 272 coordinated efforts were carried out.

- › In 2007 we individually monitored a total of 144 programme users and worked with 110 families. The following group workshops were given.
 - Magazine workshop: 41 participants
 - Women's workshop: 23 participants
 - Flamenco: 31 participants
 - Men's health workshop: 22 participants
 - Women's health workshop: 14 participants
 - Literacy: 42 participants
- › In the area of health, a programme is under way to prevent HIV infection among the Roma minority group in penitentiary centres by facilitating access to information and fostering preventive behaviours to lessen the risk of HIV/AIDS infection.

These actions are carried out in the modules of the penitentiary centre while offices are made available to us for family work and coordination with other organisations at Madrid V. Family visits are made and on some occasions to other penitentiary centres to the degree that we are able when inmates are moved from one centre to another.

Our role is to join forces in order to meet the objective of administering therapy with a view to reinserting those who have committed crimes and, specifically referring to the Roma population, we strive to raise awareness and create appropriate and tailored resources with a view to providing inmates with focused social intervention to equip the latter with the social and personal adjustment mechanisms which make their future reincorporation into society possible with sufficient guarantees that they will not become repeat offenders and can successfully integrate into society.