

# Community social action

The complex needs of the Roma community as a social group in risk of or in a situation of exclusion, 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. This approach to social action 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.

“In today’s world, the incorporation of the Roma population into the information society is vital if equal opportunity is to be guaranteed.”

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:

- › **Basic services.** Receive and cater to Roma individual with any type of need providing guidance, accompaniment and training allowing them to gain access to and use mainstream services properly.
- › **Community empowerment.** Based on an analysis of the needs prevailing in a neighbourhood/municipality, establish synergies with public resources and social entities with a view to responding to explicit and detected needs

while fostering constructive co-existence and remaining ever mindful of the importance of the active participation of community members.

- › **Housing intervention.** Promote actions which favour access to housing for Roma and the improvement of the neighbourhoods where they live.
- › **Educational mainstreaming.** Promote educational processes targeting young Roma which are as standardised as possible: foster 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 achievement of the highest possible level of academic success.
- › **Socio-educational actions with Roma youth and children.** Promote programmes designed to 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 enabling them to emerge from their situation of double marginalisation, i.e. as women and as Roma.
- › **Advancement of health and living standard.** Actions enabling members of the Roma community





VISIT TO THE MADRID CENTRE BY A GROUP OF WOMEN FROM OUR VALLECAS CENTRE

of all ages to develop good health habits with a focus on prevention while stressing access to mainstream health-care services.

- › **Basic training for adults.** Devise mechanisms allowing for the integral enrichment of people, stimulating life-long educational and cultural development.
- › **Incorporation into the information society.** Foster the creation and organisation of services to close the digital gap and foster the Roma population's access to and use of new information and communication technologies with a view to guaranteeing their integration into the information society.

› **Promotion of social participation.**

This is accomplished through the design and implementation of programmes as well as through existing platforms and opportunities for participation.

- › **Cultural promotion and multi-cultural co-existence.** Develop actions leading to the recognition, establishment, 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



IT TRAINING OF THE ROMI.NET GROUP

locations throughout Spain although with different levels of development in the different Autonomous Communities. Of the programmes implemented in this area, the following merit special mention:

- 1) **Integrated social intervention agreement with the Roma community of the city of Madrid.** Implemented in five districts of Madrid starting in 1999 (Villaverde, Usera, Carabanchel, Vallecas and Latina); in 2006 there were 9 working teams and over 40 workers dedicating their efforts to its implementation reaching over 10,000 Roma. This agreement 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.
- 2) **Territorially-based Integrated Service** for social integration work with the Roma community. The aim of this service is to optimise and guarantee the continuity of the integral work carried out with the Roma community, reinforcing social action efforts being made in the different municipalities and territories. This is undertaken within the framework of the call for projects of "General and Social Interest" by each Autonomous Community for the purpose of engaging unemployed persons. In 2006, over 150 workers participated in this task, accumulating experience in working with the Roma community and, thanks to their training and expertise, are organising and supporting the programmed community social actions.

### 3) Development and advancement of the Roma community in Castilla-La Mancha

within the framework of the III Regional Social Integration Plan 2002-2005/2006 (Spanish acronym PRIS) undertaken by the Castilla-La Mancha Regional Government and focusing on one of its main pillars: the Roma community. The FSG is implementing a community-based, integrated-action programme in 9 municipalities in coordination with the actions undertaken by the municipal social services, reinforcing the latter and enhancing the integrated actions and user participation. In 2006, there were 1,400 direct users of these actions and over 2,000 indirect beneficiaries. In the month of June 2006, the FSG took part in the PRIS technical conference which allowed for exchange and joint reflection on the programme's objectives and methodology by all of the participating technical experts from the regional and local administrations and the social entities themselves.

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

First of all, network support given to Roma organisations within the framework of the *Programme for the Good Management of Organisations through New Technologies and Quality*, funded by the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs. This consists of support actions undertaken by the FSG with local Roma organisations for the specific purpose of fostering their access to New Technologies and training their personnel in the use of tools to improve management so that they can better fulfil their role as social agents.

### SOCIAL ACTION TEAMS WORKING WITH ROMA COMMUNITY IN CASTILLA-LA MANCHA



Secondly, as part of the *Romi.net* project funded by the Ministry of Industry, Tourism and Trade within the Avanza Plan, 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 coordinated by 20 women, most of whom are Roma, who have received specific training on the empowerment of tele-centres and computer classrooms. These trainer training actions are serving to strengthen the participating empowerers who are encouraged to adopt a different and more active role in the promotion of digital literacy among individuals and entities.