

Community social action

There is a general consensus that the situation of exclusion or social disadvantage in which certain groups or individuals live is affecting different aspects of their lives, limiting and hindering the exercise of their fundamental rights and, in many cases, is responsible for undesirable inter-generational transfer.

There is also general consensus that these causes are rooted in many factors and dimensions and therefore require intervention responses which tackle all of the said factors or dimensions in a coordinated and comprehensive manner.

The community environment in which the social groups in risk of exclusion live (the case of the Roma population) marks the starting point and is also an intervention resource. Comprehensive diagnoses and global responses are needed which envisage social and cultural advancement within the groups' own community environment and, to the degree possible, with the active participation of the beneficiaries.

Well aware of these criteria, the Fundación Secretariado Gitano has been developing community-based comprehensive intervention with a view to addressing all of the difficulties facing the Roma community in the towns or regions where we work. Our work model includes intervention in different areas:

“The training of computer centre operators serves as an empowerment mechanism for participating Roma professionals who adopt a different and more active role in the promotion of digital literacy in the community



CHILDREN'S DAY CELEBRATION IN VALLECAS (MADRID).

Community empowerment. Promote constructive co-existence while remaining mindful of the active participation of the members of the community and not focus exclusively on Roma families but rather on all families living in the area establishing synergies with public resources and social entities to 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. The main needs of Roma families have to do with managing social benefits and assistance, administrative red tape, legal assistance, etc.

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 leaving and encourage the highest possible academic achievement.

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.

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.

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 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 sharing.

The Community Social Action undertaken by the FSG has taken root in different locations throughout



CHILDREN'S ACTIVITIES IN SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA.



ACTIVITIES FOCUSING ON THE USE OF NEW TECHNOLOGIES AT THE COMPUTER CENTRE.

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:

The **agreement for the implementation of the Roma Population Action Plan in the city of Madrid** 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 six districts of Madrid starting in 1999 (Villaverde, Usera, Carabanchel, Vallecas, Hortaleza and Latina); in 2008 there were 9 working teams and over 50 workers dedicating their efforts to its implementation reaching over 700 users through approximately 11,300 actions. Work has been undertaken with 22 groups of minors and youth in educational, entertainment and free-time training activities; over 500 minors have been served in the educational mainstreaming programme and close to 270 adults organised into 24 groups in the basic education programme.

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 comprehensive 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 2008, 268 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.

Development and advancement of the Roma community in Castile-La Mancha. Within the framework of the III Regional Social Integration Plan 2002-2005/2006/2007/2008 (Spanish acronym 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 has implemented an action programme in 9 municipalities in coordination with municipal social services thus reinforcing and enhancing use of the said services. In 2008 there were close to 1,500 direct users of these actions which had an indirect impact on a further 2,000 people.

And lastly, as concerns fostering the incorporation of the Roma community into the information society with a view to closing the digital gap affecting the most socially disadvantaged individuals and groups, special mention should be made of two important actions in light of their potential repercussions.

First of all, 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 Education, Social Policy and Sports, FSG actions targeting local and regional Roma organisations are implemented for the specific purpose of supporting and encouraging access



GROUP OF WOMEN TAKING PART IN A THEATRE ACTIVITY IN BURGOS.

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. Ten entities took part in 2008, 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.

Secondly, actions undertaken to attract Roma individuals to *new technology access services* with particular attention on women throughout the different Autonomous Communities. One of the main objectives this year was to spread the network of computer classrooms thus encouraging access to and use of new technologies for Roma participating in social action programmes and for others who depend on new technologies for their everyday activities.

The computer classrooms available at FSG centres have personnel who have been specially trained in coordination with the computer centres and classrooms whose main objective is to foster access to available resources within the scope of new technologies for Roma residing in the neighbourhoods where they are located and, by extension, to the entire community. It is important to mention that a great many of these activities are run by Roma professionals and a large proportion of the beneficiaries are young people, especially women. The training of computer centre operators serves as an empowerment mechanism for participating Roma professionals who adopt a different and more active role in the promotion of digital literacy in the community.