

# Community social action and combating exclusion



LINARES, CELEBRATION OF ANDALUSIAN ROMA DAY

A number of social studies and the experience of professionals support the theory that exclusion, poverty and social disadvantage in which certain groups or individuals live, directly affects 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 a large proportion of the Roma population) marks the starting point and is also an intervention resource. Comprehensive diagnoses and global responses are therefore

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.

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. This comprehensive social work with the Roma community includes actions focused on training and employment, education, youth work, attention to basic needs especially

Community development actions implemented with the Roma population seek to respond to their needs and shortcomings with a view to enabling inclusion in society, full citizenship, a better standard of living and development of their cultural identity.



ASTURIAS, TAKING EDUCATION TO THE STREET

in the case of minors, advancement of women, health, prevention of drug addiction and AIDS, access to new technologies, cultural advancement and the fight against discrimination. This comprehensive focus has the clear intention of mainstreaming. In other words, we consider these initiatives as a means by which to compensate for situations of inequality or disadvantage but ultimately should become dispensable when reality is such that they are no longer necessary.

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 regions. Of the programmes implemented in this area, the following four merit special mention:



**Action Plan serving the Roma population in the municipality of Madrid,** implemented with the aim of responding to the Roma population's needs enabling this

group to gradually integrate into society, achieve full citizenship, improve living standards and develop their own cultural identity. This plan has been under way since 1999 thanks to an agreement signed with the Madrid city council and features the following specific objectives:

1. Implement the necessary mediation structures to facilitate accompaniment of the Roma population to mainstream services and encourage their proper use.
2. Convey to the majority population a more objective and positive image of the Roma population.
3. Carry out specific actions regarding those aspects considered a priority for the advancement of Roma:
  - } Accessto public and private mainstream services.
  - } Educationalmainstreaming.
  - } Fostersocial participation and improved intercultural co-existence and citizenship.
4. Implement ongoing awareness-raising actions targeting the Roma population while encouraging the latter to take stock of their problems, comply with their duties as citizens and defend their rights and participate more actively in the social institutions and structures likely to favour their advancement.
5. Support public and private service professionals who work with Roma providing them with key information on how to handle daily problems and jointly study possible solutions.

“The situation of exclusion, poverty or social disadvantage experienced by certain groups and individuals has a direct effect on different spheres of their lives and is often the cause of undesirable inter-generational transfer.

6. Improve co-existence, increase social cohesion and reduce conflict through social mediation in difficult situations which sometimes arise and seek alternatives and solutions.
7. Encourage the full participation of Roma in the community life of the cities and towns where they live and in the society in general.

This plan has paved the way for ongoing work on different lines of action with the Roma community in Madrid, integrating actions into general services and developing complementary actions as needed in different areas. It is carried out in 6 districts throughout the municipality of Madrid and in 2009 was comprised of 9 teams and over 50 workers. It has served 1,238 people through 10,308 initiatives. 1,141 technical consultations for professionals have also been provided.

The aim of the **Territorially-based Integrated Service** for social integration work with the Roma community is to move forward



URBAN CAMP PROGRAMME RUN BY CAIXA-PROINFANCIA, VALENCIA

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 2009, 206 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.

**Castile-La Mancha’s programme for the Development and advancement of the Roma Community** was implemented within the framework of 2009’s

III Regional Social Integration Plan (PRIS) implemented by the Castile-La Mancha Regional Government. Focusing on one of its top priorities, the Roma community, the FSG implements a line of comprehensive,





community-based actions in 6 municipalities in coordination with actions carried out by municipal social services in support of the latter and to foster their comprehensiveness and the participation of users. In 2009 there were close to 2,500 direct users of these actions which had an indirect impact on a further 3,000 people.

Of the FSG's actions in this Plan, special mention should be made of the *Khetane Dromal* programme carried out in Albacete in collaboration with ACCEM (Spanish Catholic Commission Association for Migration) to compile a report-diagnosis on the Romanian Roma community living in the municipality in order to gain insight into the dimensions, socio-cultural characteristics, expectations, needs and social inclusion possibilities of the Roma population and to serve as the basis for the design of policies which faithfully respond to the reality faced by this group and for the development of specific community development programmes promoting their social inclusion, especially locally in the city of Albacete.



Also in 2009, with the support of the Social

Work component of the Caixa Foundation, the FSG has developed a specific programme to provide particularly intense support to families and minors facing serious situations of poverty and social exclusion. The so-called **Caixa-Proinfancia Programme** has been implemented by the FSG in 6 Autonomous Communities: The Community of Valencia-Valencia city, from where the FSG manages the programme directly; Catalonia-Barcelona; Aragon-Zaragoza; Murcia; Madrid; and Andalusia-Seville and Malaga.



KALÍ WOMEN'S WORKSHOP, PART OF THE CAIXA-PROINFANCIA PROGRAMME, VALENCIA

This programme especially targets families with dependent minors in an attempt to minimise the impact of poverty and social exclusion by placing a special accent on the social-educational development of children in an attempt to provide them with the same opportunities as anyone else, to prevent future situations of exclusion and also to mitigate the risk of social breakdown and raise the awareness of and mobilise the society at large. The Programme includes specific aid earmarked to palliate the precarious economic situation of families, encourage the social integration of minors and their families in risk of social exclusion, cover their most basic needs and foster their personal development.

This programme was developed in collaboration with other social organisations and public resources from each of the municipalities where it was carried out and has served as a significant supplement to the comprehensive intervention provided by professionals to a total of 6,500 minors in 2009.