

**“Area-Based Interventions for making the most of EU Fund for Sustainable Housing and Inclusion of disadvantaged Roma in pilot areas in Romania & across the border to Serbia, FYR Macedonia and Turkey”**

The project builds upon many years of UNDP expertise in the area of poverty reduction and Roma inclusion in the ECIS region, as well as Roma-targeted area-based-development projects at the local level in Cserehat, Hungary (2005-2010), Pecs, Hungary (2012-2013) and in Cluj, Romania (2012). The project relies also on the committed involvement on a national level through the UNDP offices in the 4 countries (Romania, Serbia, FYR Macedonia, and Turkey). It is being implemented as part of the wider Regional Support Facility regional project. The project aligns closely with MtM’s mission to make the most of EU funds for Roma inclusion — by holding as its prime objectives the forging and enhancement of processes and replicable models of social inclusion and desegregation through integrated local development and housing improvement, thus creating an opportunity for Roma communities in critical sites to absorb EU funds for inclusion.

**Project period:** May 2013 – ongoing

**Project background**

The present project mainly builds upon UNDP’s facilitation and involvement in local development processes in Cluj through the *Model Project for Integrated Sustainable Housing and Inclusion programme in the Cluj Metropolitan Area (CMA)* implemented in 2012. Following what became the notorious the eviction of 76 Roma families from the city’s Coastei street and their resettlement into shift- make ‘social houses’ near a garbage dumping site in the fall of 2010, various avenues for cooperation and support of the municipality addressing the urgent problems at hand were explored. The adopted ABD approach entailed the explicit focus on and engagements with targeted Roma communities, representing the four ghettoized settlements at the Pata-Rat landfill with a combined population of circa 1,500 people. All of them reside in inadequate housing conditions and suffer the multiple discriminatory effects of living in isolation.

The complex problematic which this project addresses entails several interrelated dynamics:

**The dire state of socio-economic exclusion and discrimination of Roma in CEE**, in turn related to limited access to public services, severely limited legal income opportunities, acute housing deprivation and a prevalent situation of sub-standard living conditions. As a recent study by EU-FRA and UNDP reported<sup>1</sup>, more than 80 % of Roma in Romania live in households in risk of poverty, reflecting the double that of non-

<sup>1</sup> [http://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra\\_uploads/2099-FRA-2012-Roma-at-a-glance\\_EN.pdf](http://fra.europa.eu/sites/default/files/fra_uploads/2099-FRA-2012-Roma-at-a-glance_EN.pdf).

Roma households. In the Western Balkans region and Turkey, the housing problems are further compounded by the excessive prevalence of irregular and illegal settlements.

To the extent that strategies and plans exist, they **lack an integrated participatory planning** component to ensure truly inclusive and sustainable initiatives—this is related to the lack of knowledge of soft approaches.

The fact that the usual approach to improving the housing and living conditions of disadvantaged Roma usually **entails one-sided infrastructural improvements alone** means a decreased political incentive of local actors. Such initiatives are usually experienced as far insufficient by Roma, and most frequently breed antagonisms and discrimination by majority communities-- thereby posing a roadblock to improvement.

**Local authorities lack both the political incentive and the required human resources** to jump- start a process whereby local pilot projects for sustainable housing and inclusion strategy could be developed and could serve as models in developing longer-term regional integrated programs underpinned by a sustainable strategic framework (NRIS).

This project approaches the complex problematic from several directions.

- Firstly, by facilitating local development processes in concrete pilot sites and contexts (Cluj, Braila, and Galati).
- Secondly, by seeking to facilitate the more general development process by applying the experience from pilot schemes into the development of realistic, evidence-based medium and long-term regional integrated programs, forming the basis for building a sustainable national strategic and policy framework (NRIS) in Romania.
- Lastly, the project seeks to make use of the successful models emerging out of UNDP's involvement in Romania by introducing its evolved approach to development in 2 additional countries of the Western Balkans (Serbia and FYR Macedonia) and Turkey, all three of which have been identified as crucial sites for the transfer of knowledge base with relation to local development, Roma inclusion and desegregation.

### Project Goal

Facilitate the set up and functioning, and ensure the sustainability of 'area-based' pilot initiatives for integrated housing, desegregation and inclusion of disadvantaged Roma in Romania.

Through the selected model pilot cases, contribute to localization of the Romanian NRIS and provide a model to local Roma inclusion both on a national and regional level, thereby paving the way for scaling up and replication of the project results and lessons learned in Romania to other countries in the region and on EU level and ensuring optimization of available EU resources of Roma Inclusion.

The project's activities aim at:

- Establishing local Social Inclusion Strategies and development initiatives that directly engage the participation of and benefit the most excluded Roma groups;

- Fostering delivery of public services through facilitating partnership of local authorities with civil society partners;
- Supporting municipal management in desegregation, inclusion and poverty reduction through strengthening of organizational capacity and technical expertise of local and regional development actors;
- Increasing the absorption capacity of the development stakeholders of Roma inclusion;
- In line with MtM's vision, public reform and management for a more just and equal society.

### Objectives

The main concrete objectives are the following:

- Ensure the sustainability of the overall "ABD for Inclusion" initiative and its results in Cluj and generate new strategic partnerships and projects in the wider Cluj Metropolitan area;
- Multiply the "ABD for Inclusion" model in Braila and Galati cities in Romania;
- Contribute to setting up of necessary conditions on national level to localizing the EU 2020 Roma Inclusion strategy in Romania;
- Contribute to set up of conditions for the further scaling up of implementation of the EU Roma Strategy at the local level in Central-Eastern Europe and the Balkan region, especially in FYR Macedonia, Serbia and Turkey.

### Methodology

UNDP BRC has developed a methodology to the implementation of local inclusion initiatives which has been tested in Cserehat, Pecs and Cluj, and based on the lessons and successes of these pilot projects we want to use the same methodological approach in this project. It is built around the concept of area-based development and human development, grounded in the following nine key principles:

- **Participation** and active involvement of all local stakeholders, including targeted disadvantaged Roma communities, in local development by providing fund and expertise, in addition to expanding people's knowledge, skills and ownership of the process;
- **Motivation and commitment** of those targeted to the goals of development, and self-confidence to contribute to the implementation of them, *realized through community coaching*.
- **Everyone's development.** Everyone can have ideas, and everyone can contribute. A truly inclusive development means making use of the creative force all the members of the community and ensuring their equal and active participation and voice;
- **Strengthened communication** of accumulated knowledge and experience, sharing information and best practices;

- Enhanced **social organization** of communities, directly relating to their life quality and the economic potentials;
- Recognizing and addressing the **complexity** of the development process laying in the variety of local needs, the multiplicity of people and organizations involved and the complex pattern of public bodies;
- Ensuring the dual top-down and bottom-up in character of **ABD approach**, calling upon the resources of government and the energy of the people;
- **Integrated development** which provides channels for harnessing the resources and energies of relevant bodies to coherent and coordinated development actions and process;
- **Desegregation**, targeting to avoid the separation of disadvantaged Roma groups by eliminating regulations, customs, or practices under which they restricted to specific or separate public facilities, neighborhoods, schools, organizations.

#### Methodological Tools

- Community coaching to mobilize all local resources and empower the disadvantaged local communities;
- Practice oriented research to clarify the local needs and for providing multipliable process and cases;
- Partnerships building and networking;
- Inclusion Centre for monitoring, coordination and information;
- Special participatory planning to ensure equal opportunities and ownership of the targeted (low educated) local communities;
- Preparing case studies and knowledge products.

#### Expected Outputs

- Successfully prepared Integrated Housing Project in Cluj, with the sustained participation and democratic representation of targeted Roma communities;
- Developed full-fledged Inclusion Strategy Concept, and its implementation into the new strategic plan of Cluj Metropolitan Area for the next EU programming period;
- An established and fully functioning Local Resource Centre for Inclusion in Cluj, and a fully institutionalized inclusive development process on the local level ensuring the sustainability and continuity of the OSF-MtM project;
- Implemented local interventions in the targeted communities in Braila and Galati and developed Inclusion Strategy Concept Notes in these cities;
- Strengthened and fostered partnerships between local and regional development stakeholders in Braila and Galati;
- In the three pilot sites (Cluj, Braila and Galati), generated new participatory projects for Roma inclusion, with leveraging of EU funds;



- Forged and strengthened local, regional and national networks and partnerships in Romania for localizing NRIS and developing a clear national policy framework;
- Successfully leveraged available EU resources and secured financial frameworks for the sustained development of social inclusion initiatives in the Romanian project sites;
- Successfully integrated experiences and outputs of pilots into national Romanian development plans (2014-2020);
- Achieved formulation of an integrated and inclusive approach and clear methodology for addressing exclusion and deprivation on a national level, and for transfer and application beyond EU boundaries;
- In Serbia, FYR Macedonia and Turkey, identified existing conditions, potential project sites and initiated partnerships for future cooperation, fostering viable, participatory based local level Roma inclusion and desegregation project plans;
- Developed repository of knowledge on the basis of the pilot interventions and disseminated materials on regional level.

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- UNDP BRC
- Municipality of Cluj
- Municipality of Braila
- Regional Development Agency of the South-East Development Region