

Roma Empowerment and Support for Inclusion

Case Study

Belfast, Northern Ireland



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“Don’t dismiss the Roma people, the road ahead is long but we are walking steadily to a better place. We have been walking for a long time and faced many challenges. We do not give up, we can’t.”

(Roma Assistant Community Development Worker)

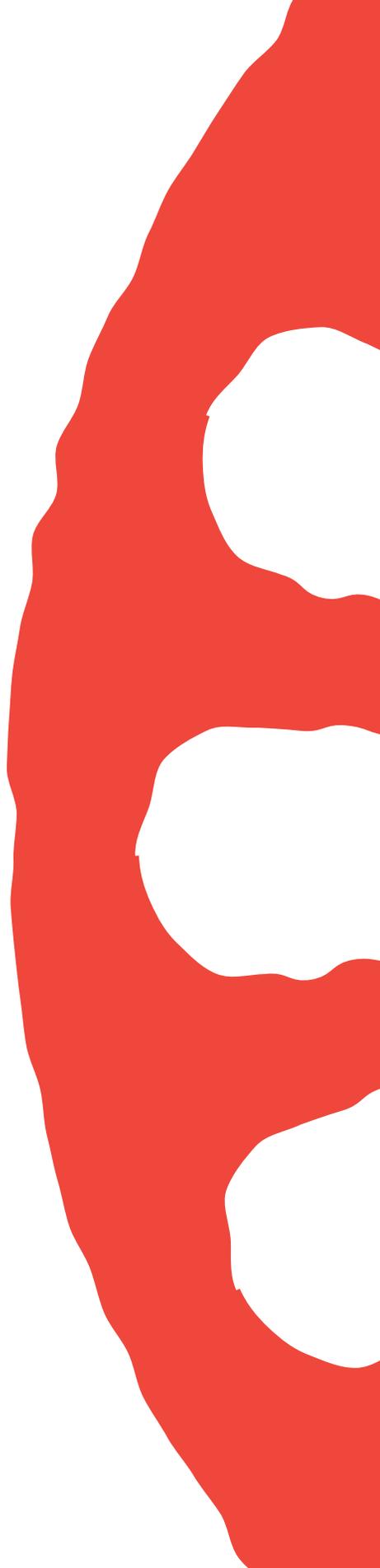


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PURPOSE OF THE CASE STUDY

The present case study is aimed at providing an accessible narrative to share promising practices and lessons learned with other actors in the field in Roma early childhood inclusion approaches. This case study is developed based on the information provided by the implementing partners and data collected during visits in countries, and focusses on interventions carried out under the aegis of the Roma Community Development Project (RCDP) with financial support from by the Bernard van Leer Foundations (BvLF) between December 2013 and July 2015, and developments since the end of the project, focussing on Romanian Roma communities and residents within the City of Belfast in Northern Ireland.

CONTEXT

The main Roma migration to Northern Ireland occurred in 2007 when family groups left Romania to resettle long-term here. Accurate numbers do not exist as Roma ethnicity has not been a category in the Northern Ireland census. It is estimated that Roma people make up less than 0.2% of the population with approximately 1,500 Romanian Roma and 500 Hungarian and Slovakian Roma living in Belfast, plus additional family groups in Craigavon and Ballymena. Many of the Belfast based Romanian Roma community come from the Arad and Bihor counties of northwest Romania. The Roma Community Development Project (RCDP) mapped 149 Roma families with children aged up to 11 years in South Belfast in December 2013. These families had 274 children in total (131 under 5 and 143 over 5 years).

Roma people are devoted to their children: to be with the community you have to work with the children. (Romanian Roma woman and Assistant Community Development Worker)

The issues Roma people face in Northern Ireland, as elsewhere, are complex, multi-layered and often entrenched. Poor health, low levels of literacy, joblessness, poor accommodation, low levels of engagement with education and discrimination are endemic. In South Belfast, at the outset of the project, no Roma children were accessing Early Years services. Overall there was poor access to employment, health, adult education, housing and community services resulting in poverty and isolation. Roma people were not involved in decision making processes, there was poor coordination of services for them and systemic barriers within the community and in mainstream provision, not least because of the lack of understanding of Roma culture and myths about the community among the wider population in Northern Ireland.

The Romanian Roma community in Northern Ireland is socially conservative with a recognised patriarchal hierarchy. There are clearly defined, and adhered to, gender roles, often governed by practices of respect and shaming. Some of these practices

are related to traditional Christian beliefs. A particular feature of the Romanian Roma community in Belfast is its strong affiliation to the Romanian Maranatha Pentecostal Church. Among other things, the Church teaches that the Bible forbids creating and encouraging parties, and prohibits the use of alcohol, tobacco and narcotics. Understanding these beliefs are important when planning activities, choosing meeting venues and celebrating achievements. Northern Ireland's Roma communities are hardworking, supportive, cohesive and traditional.

The policy framework for equality in Northern Ireland does not yet have a targeted strategy for the inclusion of Roma but a sub-Group has recently been established to work on this (see below). In the meantime, work with the Roma community in Northern Ireland takes place in a political vacuum, so it lacks coordination, accountability, support mechanisms for service providers, and agreed standards of good practice.

The BvLF's main partner in Northern Ireland was the Community Foundation for Northern Ireland (CFNI) which involved two, local partner organisations and made them principally responsible for the RCDP. Mediation Northern Ireland (MNI) was the lead partner in this project: an organisation with the organisational capacity and expertise in dealing with conflict in community development and peacebuilding work. South Belfast Roundtable (SBR) was the second partner with a mission to "work in partnership to challenge racism and promote diversity in South Belfast and with a long standing relationship with the Romanian Roma communities.

STRATEGIES EMPLOYED

The project had 4 part-time staff: Project Manager/Roma Community Development Coordinator (English and Romanian speaker), 33.7 hours per week; an Assistant Roma Community Development Worker (English, Romani and Romanian speaker) 20 hours per week and three Roma volunteers who were taken on as paid staff during part of the project. The full-time Coordinator post required prior experience of working with the Romanian Roma communities in Belfast, experience of community development, strategic work, partnership working and project/ staff management. The part time Assistant post required language skills in the Romani language, solid knowledge of the local Roma community, knowledge of community needs and interest in personal, professional development.

"I have dreams for my children; I had no chance to learn when I was young, but I want the children to learn."
(Roma parent)

The overarching objective was to work at 3 levels: Roma community, local communities and strategic/policy levels to improve the lives of Roma children and their families living in south Belfast. The project aimed to make contact with

75% of Romanian Roma families with young children on a community outreach basis to develop parenting skills and overall self-esteem and confidence with a particular focus on empowerment and employability of Roma women. The project also aimed to increase the knowledge and information available to other sectors and professionals about the Roma community and particularly Roma children, contributing to a more integrated, cohesive approach to policy development and service provision to the Roma community. Last but not least, was the ambition to increased Roma leadership and ownership of the Project.

Community mapping and family support

The main activities were:

- 2 extensive community mapping exercises (December 2013 and December 2014),
- programmes to improve parenting and employability - parenting with confidence and parenting discussion circle; women's personal development, programmed activities for mothers and children, training on health and safety, and English language classes.

The community mapping took place annually at Christmas, combined with delivery of gifts and other support. The first year, 60 children under 5 were recorded and applications received to enrol 18 in project activities. A year later, 131 children under 5 were reached. The mapping provided valuable knowledge on the profile of children and families within the area highlighting child protection issues which otherwise would have gone unnoticed. Some 37 families were referred to Sure Start support services and helped to enrol more than 50 children in nursery, primary and secondary school with follow up support provided by RCDP working with the authorities. Engagement of parents in outreach, community based activities and workshops, and partnership working with the community and social services, has resulted in parents and carers reporting increased understanding of parenting, of child development needs and of the benefits of directly supporting their children in the learning process.

Mother and toddler programme and advice service

For about six months RCDP was delivering Mother and Toddler programme in partnership with South Belfast Sure Start. This was part of the RCDP strategy of mainstreaming services hence supporting Sure Start's meaningful engagement with the Roma community. Belfast Health and Social Care Trust (Community Development Unit) funded small initiatives such as equipment and educational resources for the Mother and Toddler, childcare support for the women taking part in the employability project etc.) Programme was attended by 18 Roma women and 23 children on a drop – in basis. RRCANI continued to provide a community based [preschool programme as a part of their activities after this programme ended. RCDP provided also general advice to Roma families in accessing local health, education, employment, welfare and community safety services in about 1500 one – to one advice sessions offered to the wider Romanian Roma community, reaching 100% of the target group. .

Parenting support

The RCDP and partners ran a series of parenting support programmes with partners including a children's playgroup, parenting skills, discussion sessions, English language and making toys for children. 29 women took part. In general fathers were more difficult to engage with mainly due to limited availability and cultural norms. Nevertheless, the RCDP gained their trust and respect and the men were supportive of the women and children being part of the programmes.

Women's empowerment

On the goal of women's empowerment, the RCDP initially ran a 17-week Roma Parenting and Employability Programme which consisted of a mother and toddler group, a personal development programme and employability skills training. Nine women completed the programme, of whom 3 went on to employment. Up to 10 women who had taken part in RCDP activities were supported to gain employment as cleaners, in childcare or community liaison. For example, two were employed by the project as childcare workers, three had self-employed cleaning jobs and one applied for a post in a food processing company. It was hoped they would inspire other people in their community about possibilities and aspirations.

Cleaning was the area of work chosen by the Roma women not the RCDP. This activity was run in partnership with Bytes Project, a mainstream charity offering employability programs amongst other services. RCDP entered this partnership with the view of supporting Bytes to engage with the Roma community and develop a model to be mainstreamed.

RCDP also modelled access to formal training for illiterate speakers of another language enabling 17 Roma adults to acquire their first formal qualification of whom 12 accessed employment as a result. RCDP also designed and delivered a bespoke introductory English language course for Illiterate Speakers of Another Language and 100% of the students reported increased English language skills and satisfaction/ increased confidence re methodologies used.

Raising awareness of service providers

The project also had the effect of focusing the attention of a wide range of service providers and other professionals on the needs of the Roma community in south Belfast. There was regular contact with local doctors, social workers, teachers in the local primary and secondary schools, education and family support workers etc. ensuring that the needs of the Roma community were recognised. The RCDP participated in three local development groups - the South Belfast Family Support Hub, the South Belfast Roundtable, and the Black and Minority Ethnic health group run by the Chinese Welfare Association - which raised its profile and provided the opportunity for liaison with professionals to raise awareness of the current Roma support programmes and the needs of the Roma communities, and to advise them on tailoring their services to those needs.

Liaison with the community organization

The project also built mutually beneficial working relationships with the Romanian Roma Community Association Northern Ireland (RRCANI) which is the representative group for the local Romanian Roma Northern Ireland community and RRCANI hosted RCDP's mother and toddler group and other activities such as community consultations on its premises. Although RCDP was in close contact with the community through its own networks, they liaised with the community organization (RRCANI) to show respect for internal community hierarchies and to ensure buy-in from community representatives. This enabled better access to the wider community.

Policy and advocacy activities

Implementers of RCDP took part in numerous policy fora and lobbied governmental agencies for improved services for the Roma community, including presentation of a briefing paper on Education for Roma children in Belfast, and a meeting in May 2015 with the Children's Commissioner for NI on this topic.

The project also supported Roma to voice their own concerns to service providers by facilitation of 5 Roma people to take part in Belfast Health and Social Care Trust consultations and share their experience of the health services and support to 10 local young Roma to contribute to the Children's Law Centre's alternative report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child on the experiences of Young People in NI.

Between April 2014 and 2015, the RCDP's implementing partner South Belfast Round table facilitated a Roma Working Group which met regularly throughout the RCDP bringing together professionals working with the Roma communities in Belfast as well as community representatives in the form of RRCANI. The Group was very well attended by representatives of community and statutory organisations delivering services to the Roma communities (both at grass-roots and strategic levels) in the areas of health, education, employment, welfare and wellbeing, community development, housing and community safety.

The work with the Roma community became better coordinated as a result and proactive, with gaps or issues identified and solved in advance. The Roma Working Group continues to be coordinated by South Belfast Roundtable in partnership with RRCANI and is meeting every 3 months.

As a member of the Common Platform (April – June 2015), the RCDP also contributed to the consultation on a draft Racial Equality Strategy and engaged with 80 Roma individuals who fed their views in to the Government. In 2015, The Northern Ireland Executive Office (The Racial Equality Unit) recognised the need to develop specific measures to support the inclusion of Roma and Traveller Communities in Northern Ireland as part of the Racial Equality Strategy. They also recognised the need to invest in the Roma communities and are currently funding the staff in RRCANI. They have commissioned a research into the living experiences of the Roma communities in Northern Ireland to initiate this work and inform actions. RRCANI have supported the research consultations and is represented on the Research Steering Committee. The research will be completed by September 2016. They have also established a Roma and Traveller Subgroup to the Racial Equality Group, who will be tasked with the implementation of the

Racial Equality Strategy/ the Roma and Traveller recommendations. RRCANI is represented on this subgroup. The Roma Working Group, the recommendations for policy development and the RCDP advocacy work have all been instrumental in starting this process.

Raising public awareness about the Roma

The project also worked to raise public awareness of Roma culture and to dispel myths about the community. They collaborated with RRCANI and others to organise celebrations such as for International Roma Day, Romanian national day, Roma Holocaust Memorial Day enabling a wide audience of policy makers and service providers to consolidate links with the Roma community and learn more about Roma history and culture. Project staff provided Roma awareness training to Belfast Education and Library Board Inclusion and Diversity Officers and to staff and other attendees at a Community Relations Week hosted by the Health and Social Care Trusts as well as the Early Years Organisation for Young People.

Cleaning was the area of work chosen by the Roma women not the RCDP. This activity was run in partnership with Bytes Project, a mainstream charity offering employability programs amongst other services. RCDP entered this partnership with the view of supporting Bytes to engage with the Roma community and develop a model to be mainstreamed.

RCDP contributed to the development of Roma related resources, for example 'Living in Belfast DVD' (a guide to local services for the Romanian Roma community in Belfast, 'Guesses at inclusion' a collection of insights on working with the Romanian Roma community in Belfast, aimed at local service providers. The tool was very well received and is widely used.

Increasing Roma leadership and ownership of the project

Finally on increased Roma leadership and ownership of the project, the key strategies employed were mentoring and support of the Roma staff and developing the relationship with RRCANI.

After they received training for employment (including qualifications in childcare) Roma staff gained hands-on experience in working with children and families, working independently for example, organising play activities for children. The Roma Community Development Assistant directly supported the work with Sure

Start staff and was a key link for communication with the Roma community, she also worked with external facilitators to deliver English language, women's health and family support services to them. The Assistant worked with the Roma staff to plan and deliver Mother and Toddler activities and the Parenting discussion programme. Continuing development opportunities for Roma staff on the project included in house training on Roma history, Child Development, Child Protection, Health and Safety, Basic IT skills, Activity Planning, Reporting and they had external courses including English classes and Early Movers training. The RCDP Assistant and one of the Childcare Support Workers have been supported to find further paid work.

RRCANI is a community organisation set up by the leaders of the Romanian Roma community in Belfast. When RCDP started, together with other organisations, to work with RRCANI, it was in an incipient stage of development due to limited organisational and practical skills. It was also controversial in the community and statutory sector. Through joint efforts the capacities of RRCANI to represent the Roma community, deliver projects and be recognised as a legitimate community organisation were developed.

From the outset, the RCDP has worked closely with RRCANI modelling good practices in terms of requirements for playgroups (i.e. health and safety, children ratio, staff, resources), organising and facilitating cultural events, working in partnership with other organisations. The Parenting Programme was based in RRCANI's premises. The relationship has worked to the advantage of both groups; for example, the RCDP supported RRCANI's engagement with the Romanian National Day celebration enabling RRCANI to facilitate certain aspects of the event; and RRCANI supported RCDP in gathering relevant information for their community mapping exercise.

There is a power imbalance between service providers and the Roma community. Trust, confidence, knowledge and language, **CHALLENGES** even with interpretation, are barriers to communication. The Roma consultees may comply with the agenda because they hope to get a service, or do not want to offend. They are unable/unwilling to complain even if they are unhappy with the service and may also be unable to articulate in English the solution which will address the multiple deprivation they experience.

For example: placing 3-year-old children in a nursery is contrary to Roma practice where 3 years olds are considered too young to be separated from their mother. Initially, when the RCDP asked mothers to send their 3 year olds

to their playgroup the Roma mothers gave a reluctant commitment. Unsurprisingly, these promises of engagement did not materialise into attendance. Later when mothers were also invited to come along, there was full attendance.

Another example was enrolment of children in mainstream nursery provision and Sure Start provision. This failed and children were withdrawn due to parents' dissatisfaction with the approaches used. However, when community based provision was made, based in RRCANI premises, to model a culturally sensitive approach, 40 parents and 50 children attended on a regular basis and one year after the end of the RCDP, Sure Start continue to deliver the Parent and Toddler in RRCANI, with approximately 20 mothers and children attending on a weekly basis. Sure Start employ the Roma worker mentored by the RCDP to assist with delivering this programme.

Reliability and personal relations are very important. From the very beginning RCDP was aware of that and a lot of energy was invested in this area of work. The biggest challenge was to make mainstream partners understand how this is important. Sometimes home visits to complete family assessments did not take place as arranged because previous visits had overrun. Failure to keep to appointments damaged trust and caused families to question the RCDP commitment to them. Although workers tried to manage unavoidable changes carefully by providing information promptly on what happened and rearranging appointments as soon as possible, they found that being consistent with the agreed appointments was very important.

Although the project was successful in devising innovative and effective ways of reaching out to the Roma community and improving lives and prospects, ability to scale these up and maintain momentum was constrained by limited staff time and capacity. This affected scale up of the training programmes for illiterate people and the community engagement consultations among others.

OUTCOMES The RCDP has successfully engaged with the Romanian Roma community in South Belfast and built relationships on which further long-term work can be developed. The project used a rights-based approach which improved participation and empowerment of the Roma participants. Strong links have been developed with statutory and other agencies working with vulnerable children and parents and mainstream provision has improved through lobbying, relationship building and willingness to share information, knowledge and learning.

The confidence and self-esteem of Roma participants, volunteers and staff engaged in the projects has grown and there is now a foundation of meaningful engagement with the Romanian Roma community. Feedback received indicates that the mothers enjoyed the programme as it catered for both them and their children, was interactive, did not rely on reading and writing, and was delivered in familiar languages (Romani and Romanian). The children benefited by playing and being with other children. The mothers found it a good learning experience as they could explore their own experiences of being parented and of parenting. It increased their ability to manage children's challenging behaviour, which was their greatest difficulty. They understand better the benefits for children attending a structured programme. Roma women reported that they had gained an increased sense of confidence and empowerment through the range of activities supported by the RCDP. They had greater awareness of rights and health issues, better English language skills, enabling them to engage more on the local scene, more access to mainstream services and the confidence to share information and impart skills to their peers in the Roma community. The Roma staff worked well as part of the team and they were also able to do independent work, with prior preparation or under supervision. The volunteers in RRCANI were inspired particularly by the programmes for young children which they are continuing.

Roma integration into the wider community has been fostered by providing better early years support, encouraging parental empowerment and developing employment skills. With further funding and support, this foundation should result in the articulation of Roma voices in the development of relevant policy and services in Northern Ireland.

Unexpected accomplishments?

Roma people who participated in the RCDP programmes are actively disseminating their learning in the community re parenting, pre-school activities and the range of service providers they have become familiar with. The staff report that these happen as ad-hoc meetings that the women organise in their homes to discuss the issues.

LESSONS LEARNED **Involve Roma people**

Tangible inclusion of the Roma community is best shown by direct employment of Roma workers and volunteers who bring invaluable insight and understanding. Roma workers bring social expertise, community wisdom and authenticity. The learning and development needs of Roma workers includes IT and English language training. It is helpful to make this investment in the early stages of employment.

“You have to really know the people to work with them”
(Community Development Worker) It is important to recognise that Roma workers may be taking risks within their own community to engage in community development work as they are challenging cultural norms; it is important to recognise this and to ensure adequate and appropriate support is available.

It is crucial to respect the diversity within Roma communities and ideally the Roma workers should be from the same group, speak the same dialect and have solid knowledge of community contexts.

Adapt to the community

Because of the vulnerability they face, Roma people value personal relationships. They prefer set routines over variable appointments. Outreach into the community is a good way of initiating contact.

Adapt services to Roma people's needs. Failure to engage Roma people may point to a cultural barrier that has not been recognised, including assumptions on the part of service providers. Learning should be two way.

Work with respect and humility

When working with the Roma community it is important to remember that we are 'strangers' and, historically, strangers were dangerous. MNI's work was only possible because it was a partnership with South Belfast Roundtable which had a long-term, tried, tested and trusted relationship with the Romanian Roma community.

Proactive engagement

Service providers' workers need to address the problems experienced by the community, not the problems experienced by the service. In the example of school attendance, exploring why children are not at school is more appropriate than condemning parents because of non-attendance.

Build a communal relationship

The project was built on a communal relationship with the community based on concern for the wellbeing of children, their parents and their extended support network. Such relationships are the norm within the Romanian Roma community in Belfast whilst exchange relationships are often the norm within the statutory and voluntary sectors. The project manager identified this as probably the primary cause of disconnect and failed engagement between service providers and the Romanian Roma community.

Building this relationship meant spending time visiting every home and introducing themselves to every family: creating a pictogram info sheet about the programme that explained the components through images rather than words; talking to each woman individually about the RCDP and listening to the questions that emerged; explaining the benefits of participation not only to the women involved but to the extended family so that the family could collectively agree the value of the RCDP; negotiating a tailor made approach with every service delivery agency that connected in with the RCDP and having challenging conversations when programmes were not meeting participants' needs.

"A project for Roma communities should have Roma workers" (Community Development Worker)

Respect the 'whole family' approach

Introducing activities to the Roma community is often spearheaded through work with women and children. Women in the Roma community are traditionally responsible for raising children, health and education. Traditionally, men are the breadwinners and are responsible for decision-making. Adopting a 'whole family' approach when engaging with the Roma community is important. Understanding and respecting the interdependence of men, women and children within the extended family is vital.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

External evaluation was embedded in the project from the very beginning. CFNI hired an external evaluator and her role was to develop periodical reports on project progress and the degree in which project met its goals and objectives. Reports were developed in 2013/2014/2015.

Based on the recommendations from the reports changes were made in the project implementation.

The project was also monitored by the ISSA staff, and the role of ISSA was to visit project site, to meet with the project implementers, representatives of CFNI, MNI, SBRT and external evaluator.

During her visits ISSA representative also met with the representatives of the Sure Start program, RRCANI, Belfast Health and Social Care Trust and other relevant agencies. She also took part in the advocacy and policy events.

SCALABILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY

Although not included in its agreed objectives, the RCDP has had significant success in relation to obtaining continuation funding for the work with Roma families and children. Staff facilitated consultations with the Roma community on a funding application for an Intercultural Parenting Programme to include Roma parents, and worked with others on another application to increase the Sure Start capacity work with the Roma community. One outcome of this was that the Government provided 9 months of funding in June 2015 for 2 community development posts based in RRCANI to strengthen their governance, build capacity, ensure future sustainability and support the delivery of services by others (including Sure Start's pre-school/parenting programme, Early Years Organisation's childcare project, Trademark's Women's Rights training programme, Belfast Education and Library Board Inclusion and Diversity programmes for young women/older women/youths, etc.) within RRCANI premises. Further investing in RRCANI was a collective, conscious decision at Roma Working Group level, as the Roma community was at risk of being left without support, with RCDP and other Roma projects coming to an end.

The RCDP Project Manager went on to manage RRCANI when the RCDP ended: to build capacity in RRCANI and to continue to embed the good practice from RCDP in the subsequent Roma community work.

In addition, the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust has employed the former RCDP assistant community development worker on a 3-year contract, 20 hours per week, as a Roma Health Support Worker with a particular focus on women and children. Her new role includes health visiting with Roma families, immunisation and providing access to family support.

The employment of the 3 Roma staff on the RCDP consolidated their status within the project as valuable team members involved in the design and delivery of the programmes. It is hoped that they have become points of reference in the Roma community who liaise with them when accessing relevant services. They are perceived as a good model for other women in the community, especially young girls. The training allowed them to gain knowledge and confidence for carrying out their daily duties. The hands-on experience and the mentoring enabled them to adjust the work to their personal styles and abilities and build their confidence.

RRCANI has received Government funding for capacity building work; its activities will build on the RCDP work and will have a strong focus on young children and their families. With appropriate support from funders and service providers, it will continue to work towards facilitating the delivery of advice, parenting programmes, pre-school and after-school programmes, early years work, programmes for women and young people, anti-racist training delivered by Roma individuals, acting as a resource and development agency for the local Romanian Roma community.

RRCANI have placed access to early years as one of the key priorities for the organisation over the next 5 years and are currently seeking to register as an early years provider. They are seeking funding to develop the pre-school service and support a greater number of children and Roma families continue to be supported to enrol their children in mainstream nurseries.

Promotion of Roma leadership and involvement

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY AND PRACTICE

Roma inclusion means explaining programmes to existing Roma leaders and asking for their support to bring the programme into the wider community. When Roma leaders advocate for a programme there is greater participation and in turn a range of new grassroots activists voice

their needs. At the same time it is important to involve Roma workers, to give them status and visibility.

A long term approach

Commit to long-term support; build trust and strong long-term alliances with the community. MNI and SBR as sponsors of the RCDP, are confident that the pilot programmes developed can be scaled up (some are already being up scaled) with further financial and staff (expertise) investment. The aim will be to scale up the programmes with the local mainstream provision, meaning that funding can be minimal (to cover the costs related to employing staff tasked with mediating the process between service provider and the Roma communities).

There needs to be further investment in professional development of staff supporting the work with the Roma community as currently the pool of expertise (people who can coordinate the work) is very limited.

Specific but not exclusive or segregated solutions are best

Do not segregate Roma by providing separate services to them – find ways of service delivery that are specific to their needs but not exclusive to them. RCDP achieved this by developing partnerships with mainstream organisations to enable their access to the Roma community through assisting them to establish tailor-made bridging services and by supporting service delivery. This proved to be cost effective and accessible to Roma while not segregating them. Currently 15 mainstream organisations deliver their services to the Roma community in RRCANI (based on the model promoted by the RCDP).

Never underestimate the power of small-scale community-based projects

Although this project started as a small scale one, it had a significant impact. The reputation and strength of the implementing partners was an important impeller – they managed to get trust of the Roma community, mobilize key community champions, build partnerships with different agencies and donors (only salaries and honoraria were paid through the BvLF funded project, other activities were paid by other donors). Their connections and experience in

working on the issues of social justice and reconciliation among separated communities provided them with valuable knowledge and skills and the space to voice the problems that Roma community is facing.

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