

**Towards Gender Inclusive Policy Interventions for Roma Women
The ‘Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015’ in Hungary**

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Abstract

Roma women's disadvantaged social positioning makes them the most marginalized within the Roma community as well as in the majority society. Roma women are multiply vulnerable and oppressed as women from a disadvantaged minority community, and their combined gender and ethnic status clearly contributes to their economic marginalization too. These multiple disadvantages and discrimination arising from their social position keep Roma women deprived from their right to education, employment, health and housing. Roma women therefore ought to be a special focus of policy interventions. Drawing from these facts I decided to conduct a gender and intersectional analysis of the key 'policy scripts' operational in the field of Hungarian Roma policy at the national level and proposed by number of civil society initiatives. I have analyzed core documents related to the Decade of Roma Inclusion in Hungary to see how gender inclusive they are. I have employed gender analysis and intersectionality theory to analyze the Hungarian Decade Strategic Plan for the four Decade priority areas i.e. education, employment, health and housing as well as the intersection of these four areas with each other and the additional dimension of regional disparity. Through this analysis and with the help of semi-structured interviews with Roma women activists, academics, representatives of relevant governmental institutions and civil society actors I have shown that the Hungarian Decade National Action Plan lacks a gender perspective leading to implicit discrimination of Roma women. I have also discussed examples of gender aware Roma policy and Roma (women's) activism to suggest policy lessons for the Decade National Action Plan. The study concludes by putting forward suggestions for effective gender inclusive policy in the Decade National Action Plan and the priority areas, based on the analysis of the existing 'policy scripts' and examples of activist Roma (women's) policy.

Key Words

Roma Women, Roma Women's Activism, Gender Inclusive Policy, Gender Analysis,

Intersectionality, Decade of Roma Inclusion, Hungary, National Action Plan

List of Acronyms

CEDAW: The Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

DTF: Decade Trust Fund

ETA: Equal Treatment Authority

ERRC: European Roma Rights Organisation

ESF: The European Social Fund

EU: European Union

HIC: Habitat International Coalition

ISC: The International Steering Committee

JBN: Jai Bhim Network

MEP: Members of European parliament

NAP: National Action Plan

NEKI: The Legal Defense Bureau for National and Ethnic Minorities

NGO: Non Governmental Organisation

OECD: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

OSI: Open Society Institute

RCRF: Roma Civil Rights Foundation

ToR: Terms of References

UNHCR: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

UNICEF: United Nations Children's Fund

UNIFEM: United Nations Fund for Women

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Introduction

Roma are one of the largest ethnic minorities of Europe with the estimated population of 10-12 million (European Commission estimation). Most of them are EU citizens. However the large majority face persistent discrimination, live a substandard life, deprived of proper access to quality education, employment, housing and health care. Likewise in Hungary Roma form the largest ethnic minority group with the population of 550,000-600,000 or about 5.3-5.8 percent of Hungary according to the estimation contained in a generally accepted sociological survey (Roma Education Fund 2007: 14). However, as per the nationalities survey under the national census of 2001, the people identified themselves as belonging to the group of the Roma, numbered 190,000 or approximately 1.8 percent of the population proportion of Hungary (ibid). This gap between the census and the sociological survey on the Roma population show that Roma people are hesitant to reveal their identity and the reasons for this could be several, one being the hostility and discrimination against Roma.

According to senior researcher Roni Stauber, violence against the Roma minority in Hungary dates back to World War II, during which Roma were victims of the Nazi genocide but the violence didn't end with the war. During the early 1990s Roma became main targets of verbal and physical violence by extreme right parties and skinheads (Stauber, 2009:1). More recently the European Roma Rights Center¹ report on "attacks against Roma in Hungary" shows "49 cases of violent attacks on Roma and their property, highlighted in the Hungarian media, between January 2008 and April 2011" (ERRC Report 29th April 2010). While direct violent attacks due to their immediate impact get some attention from media and the state institutions,

¹ Hereafter ERRC

the indirect discrimination faced by Roma in education, employment, housing and health is hard to prove. The ERRC written comments concerning Hungary for consideration by the UN committee on CEDAW note that “Roma women are the most vulnerable to both direct and indirect violence and discrimination amongst Roma and within the larger society both as Roma and as women” (ERRC comments CEDAW 39th session, 2007).

There are various initiatives at national and international levels, such as the intergovernmental commitment of 12 European states to the ‘Decade of Roma Inclusion² 2005-2015’³ to create policies for Roma inclusion. At the level of European Union (EU) the EURoma Network⁴, European structural funds⁵ and the recent EU Roma Strategy⁶ are important. Nationally, Hungary as a member of the Decade initiative has made a Parliamentary resolution in the year 2007 and formulated Strategic Plan and National Action Plan (NAP) for the Decade priority areas. As the current Presidency of the Council of the EU, Hungary has made a commitment under the

² Hereafter ‘the Decade initiative’

³“Decade of Roma inclusion is a 2005–2015 is a political commitment by European governments to improve the socio-economic status and social inclusion of Roma. The Decade is an international initiative that brings together governments, intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations, as well as Romani civil society” (Decade of Roma Inclusion website) More about Decade of Roma Inclusion is in the section 1.3

⁴“EURoma Network is a European Network on Social Inclusion and Roma under the Structural Funds made up of representatives of twelve Member States. The Network is determined to promote the use of Structural Funds (SF) to enhance the effectiveness of policies targeting the Roma and to promote their social inclusion” (the EURoma website)

⁵“There are four structural funds at present that allow the European Union to grant financial assistance to resolve structural economic and social problems, The European Regional Development Funds (ERDF), The European Social Fund (ESF), the European Agricultural Guidance and Guarantee Fund (EAGGF - Guidance Section), the Financial Instrument for Fisheries Guidance (FIFG)” (the European Commission website)

⁶“European Union Roma Strategy introduced on 5th April 2011 is a framework created to respond to Roma exclusion by setting EU-wide goals for integrating Roma, in education, employment, health and housing. National frameworks are in the process of formation.” (Europa Press release EU website)

Cordoba Declaration⁷ in April 2010 to promote the social and economic inclusion of Roma and improve access to fundamental rights (EU News on Hungarian Presidency 2011). Hungary has also committed by adopting the EU framework Roma Policy at national level.

In this thesis I aim to demonstrate, using Hungary as an example, that these concrete steps to ensure Roma rights would prove to be more effective and could expand to a larger Roma community if they are designed and put into practice in a gender inclusive manner. My analysis will also show that Roma women's disadvantaged social positioning makes them the most marginalized within the Roma community as well as in the majority society. Roma women are multiply vulnerable and oppressed as women from the disadvantaged minority community, and their combined gender and ethnic status clearly contributes to their economic marginalization too. Roma are overrepresented in the lowest class and poverty affects Roma women specifically. These multiple disadvantages and discrimination arising from their social position keep Roma women deprived from their right to education, employment, health and housing. Roma women therefore ought to be a special focus of policy interventions. Drawing from this fact, I aim to analyze how gender inclusive the Policy interventions of the Decade initiative in Hungary are. I will do a gender and intersectional analysis of the key 'policy scripts' operational in the field of Hungarian Roma policy at the national level and proposed by number of civil society initiatives.

My purpose to choose issue of Roma women and policies related to the Decade for this study is based on two considerations. Firstly, being from an oppressed minority community in India and a woman myself I feel committed to study and understand the issues of minority women around the world. Living in Hungary gave me the opportunity to study Roma women's issues, which I

⁷ "It's a Joint Declaration made by three EU Presidencies (trio, Spain, Belgium & Hungary) during the second Roma summit held in Cordoba on 8-9 April" (Declaration weblink)

want to take forward, in this way contributing to development of gender sensitive Roma policy. Secondly, the Decade is an ongoing policy effort, and my analysis of gender inclusiveness of the Decade plans, policies and some civil society initiatives is therefore aimed at creating an advocacy tool for the Roma women's civil society.

There are a few additional contexts why focusing on Hungary for this study is of relevance beyond giving information on the Hungarian 'case' and also beyond the fact that my case study on an analytical level demonstrates the general relevance of a gender and intersectional analysis of Roma politics. The Hungarian government took the lead "in preparing for the Decade goals in 2004 with the involvement of Roma and other stakeholders" (Decade 1st ISC Meeting, 2003:2). The Decade Secretariat⁸ is based in Hungary and the Open Society Institute which is the co-founder of the Decade, has its Roma Initiative Program headquarters in Hungary. The Roma Initiative has special focus on the Roma women's issues. My study owes a lot to information accessed through this institution and cooperation with researchers in its orbit. The Roma Initiative Program is important in particular in view of how the co-ordination between the government and non-government actors shaped the practical programs for Roma women's inclusion. Last not least Livia Jaroka and Viktoria Mohacsi, two Roma women politicians from Hungary, became the Member of European Parliament, and their work on the European level is closely connected to and draws from the Hungarian background and experience.

My study is structured as follows. In chapter one I will talk about Roma and Roma Politics in Hungary. Discussing the educational, socio-economical and political status of Roma women in Hungary I will establish the case of Roma women's multiple marginalization. I will also briefly

⁸ "Decade Secretariat is a technical support unit for the Decade initiative. It is based in Budapest, Hungary. The creation of this unit is supported by the Open Society Institute." (Decade of Roma Inclusion website)

discuss the Roma women's movement pointing out how the Roma women's civil society efforts address the issues of discrimination and marginalization and reclaim their educational, socio-economic and political rights within the Roma community as well as in the larger society. In the last section I introduce Roma politics in Hungary and in particular 'the Decade initiative' and its functioning.

In chapter two I discuss the research objectives, research questions, the analytical framework and the research design. I elaborate on the theories I use. Since I do a gender and intersectional analysis of the Decade Plans and some civil society initiatives, the theories I will employ are gender analysis and intersectional analysis. I also describe the methods I use for this study, namely semi-structured interviews with Roma women activists, academics, representatives of relevant governmental institutions, civil society actors and representatives of the Decade secretariat.

In chapter three I develop my analysis of the tasks enumerated in the Hungarian Decade Strategic Plan for the four Decade priority areas i.e. education, employment, health and housing as well as intersection of these four areas with the additional dimension of regional disparity that emerges as a common factor in all four areas.

In chapter four I will discuss examples of gender aware Roma policy and Roma (women's) activism. Here I will show what policy lessons national and international actors can draw from these examples to create gender inclusive policies.

Finally in the fifth chapter I will summarize some recommendations based on my own research as well as suggested by various stakeholders such as Roma women activists, academics,

representatives of relevant governmental institutions, civil society actors and representatives of the Decade secretariat to enhance gender inclusiveness in the NAP of the Decade initiative.

Chapter1. Roma and Roma Politics in Hungary

In the first section of this chapter I will discuss the educational, socio-economic and political status of Roma women in Hungary. In the next section I will discuss the Roma women's movement and Roma women's efforts to address the issues of discrimination and marginalization. In the last section I introduce Roma politics in Hungary and in particular 'the Decade initiative' and its functioning.

1.1 The educational, socio-economic and political status of Roma women

A study by the European commission 'Ethnic minority and Roma women in Europe: A case for gender equality?' talks about "gender inequality faced by ethnic minority and Roma women in their socio-economical life in Europe" (European Commission 2010: 10). It states that "even though data on the status of Roma women are particularly scarce, most of the sociological studies show that Roma women experience greater social exclusion than Roma men and the women of the majority community, especially in accessing employment, education, health and social services" (European Commission 2010: 10)

In a study by Maria Pantea⁹ 'Gender Mainstreaming in the National Action Plans for the Decade of Roma Inclusion', Pantea summarizes OSI and UNDP study findings on education attainment of Roma. She states that "across all Central and Eastern European countries, Roma women's

⁹ The study 'Gender Mainstreaming in the National Action Plans for the Decade of Roma Inclusion' by Maria Carmen Pantea is extensively referred to for my research. "This study was commissioned by UNIFEM CEE in order to support the UNDP Bratislava Regional Centre in completing a gender mainstreaming assessment of the National Action Plans for the Decade for Roma Inclusion" (Pantea 2009:1). There are four parts of the study and in the first part study does a gender analysis of the Decade National Action Plans of Decade partaking countries, on the basis of which Pantea categorizes various countries according to their progress in addressing gender disparities in the Decade priority areas (ibid).

education attainment levels are significantly lower than those of Roma men” (Pantea 2009:14). Roma girls drop out from school due to various reasons, such as customs and values of Roma community that expect Roma girls to enter into domestic work at an early age, in traditional Roma families girls are married at the age of fourteen and there are low educational expectations from girls, even so, Pantea further emphasizes, “school segregation largely affects education attainment of Roma boys and girls, even if the effects of age, poverty, incidence of illness, and relative absence of positive role models are controlled for” (Pantea 2009:15).

The Decade Watch¹⁰ report 2005-2006 of Hungary states that the Hungarian data protection law prohibits collection of data on ethnic and racial issues. The data on Roma in the education system are not systematically maintained, consequently little information on Roma school enrollment comes from the school records which are not updated regularly (Decade Watch 2005: 87). The lack of updated ethnic and disaggregated data could contribute to the records that show low drop-out rates among Roma in Hungary. Even though the Decade watch report stresses on low drop-out rate of Roma (ibid), the report doesn’t establish the link between the lack of disaggregated data and the low drop-out rates of Roma children.

Further the Decade watch report mention the problems faced by Roma in the education system in Hungary such as segregation into separate and mostly all Roma schools that offer substandard education. In addition Roma students are often sent to ‘catch up’ classes where they follow remedial curriculum. These series of problems faced by Roma impact their attainment of education (Decade watch 2005: 88). The gender dimension of problems affecting Roma women

¹⁰ “Decade Watch is the mechanism developed for the assessment of government action on implementing the commitments expressed under the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005–2015. This assessment has been conducted by coalitions of Roma NGOs and activists from all countries participating in the Decade. Decade Watch is supported by Open Society Institute and the World Bank.” (the Decade for Roma Inclusion website)

is not explored in the Decade watch report, but Pantea shows the reasons for low attainment of school for Roma girls in Central and Eastern European countries. Likewise it can be said that in Hungary there is low attainment of education amongst Roma women due to the various reasons mentioned above.

According to Pantea “the low level of education impacts on the employment opportunities of Roma women. study shows that in Central and Eastern Europe Roma women are concentrated in unstable jobs with low or no benefits” (Pantea, 2009:22) Pantea refers to the statistical data from the UNECE Gender Statistics Database, which states that “Roma women are more likely to work in underpaid jobs for example in the textile industry, communal services, subsistence agriculture and tend to have longer working hours (over 16) than non-Roma women” (Pantea 2009:22). Additionally, the majority of Roma women do unpaid and poorly recognized, domestic work even though many of them have some professional qualification in hairdressing, sewing or cooking, according to Pantea this trend is observed in Hungary and Bosnia Herzegovina¹¹ (Pantea, 2009:21). This employment scenario of Roma women in Europe as well as in Hungary indicates that Roma women are likely to be economically dependent either on the male member of the family or on the state social benefits that very often are not sufficient and are very difficult to obtain.

Roma women’s vulnerability is also attributed to their lack of ownership (ERRC written comments CEDAW 38th session n.d.: 3). Since Roma are overrepresented in the disadvantaged regions in Hungary where there is lack of opportunity for work and education, due to these factors Roma women remain economically poor and dependent.

¹¹ Hereafter BiH

Coming to Roma women's political participation in Hungary, with a few exceptions of Roma women's representation at Hungarian parliamentary level – such as Agnes Osztolykan and at European level members of European parliament (MEP) Livia Jaroka and Viktoria Mohacsi – there is a very low representation of Roma women in the higher levels of politics. At the same time there are a good number of Roma women activists in Hungary participating in grassroots civil politics and activism; some of these Roma women are part of the local Roma minority government and others are community leaders. Important examples will be discussed in chapter four. In the next section I will introduce general features of Roma women's activism.

1.2 Roma Women's Rights Movement

Ostalinda Maya, a researcher of Roma origin states that writing about Roma women's movement often causes controversy. One reason is that discussions of the specific problems afflicting Roma women are considered as threat to the Roma movement. Some Roma male leaders argue that the patriarchal traditions are integral components of the Roma identity and culture and discard the idea of forming a Roma women's movement. Some see the Roma women's movement as a rupture of the Roma movement (Maya 2006:1).

Another set of tensions arises around the question as to whether the struggle of Roma women's activists could or should be labeled a 'movement'. According to Maya "movements have often been perceived as collective mobilizations with an organizational structure" (Maya 2006:1). If looked at from this perspective there are only a few hundred educated Roma women activist but there is need to look beyond the organized Roma women's activism (Maya 2006: 1). In Maya's view "the Roma women's movement is probably much bigger than conferences and reports

allow us to see, the fact that there is something we can refer to as a movement is already an extremely positive thing” (Maya, 2006: 2).

According to Maya the Roma women’s movement in Europe evolved in response to the lack of attention awarded to Roma women’s rights within the Roma movement (Maya, 2006:1). Maya terms the evolution of the Roma women’s rights movement as an organic process “through the wider pursuit of Roma rights by Roma women and men over the years in response to the initial (and mostly continuing) lack of attention to women’s issues on the part of the predominantly male leaders” (Maya, 2006:1). Maya emphasizes that Roma women’s movement means to stand against both the racism of the wider society and patriarchy within and outside of the Roma community and in this sense according Maya “the Roma women’s movement is about personal change and self-empowerment as well as collective and social change (Maya 2006: 2).

Angela Kocze, another Roma scholar voices a different perspective when discussing Roma women’s movement. In her view we should talk about Roma women’s political activism rather than movement. According to Kocze there certainly is Roma women’s political activism while a Roma women’s movement as such does not exist (Interview Kocze, 26th April 2011). A movement according to Kocze is a concentrated effort towards a common goal whereas Roma women’s activism is limited to a very few politically active Roma women (Interview Kocze, 26th April 2011).

Kocze critically talks about what she calls a ‘missing perspective’ on analytical as well as activist levels. She says that gender as a perspective is not included in the Roma policies. She gives the Decade initiative as an example. She says that even though gender equality and anti-discrimination are designed to operate as cross-cutting categories for the thematic priorities of

the Decade Strategic Plan, a gendered perspective is not developed in actual reality and is therefore absent from the policies. (Interview Kocze, 26th April 2011).

Kocze talks from the grassroots perspective, in her opinion a movement should be owned by people at the grassroots. The movement should have a direct impact on people's lives. Roma women's activism at national and transnational politics has successfully promoted recognition for Roma issues, and on this basis a Roma women's movement could be formed. Kocze says that the activism of Roma women at various levels is remarkable, however it is still disconnected and scattered. Kocze finally emphasizes that Roma activists have to interrogate this term 'movement' and progress towards creating a movement which is connected with all levels of activism from grassroots to transnational (Interview Kocze, 26th April 2011).

Even though there are varying views on the existence and characteristics of a Roma women's movement, Kocze and Maya seem to have consensus on the existence of Roma women's activism. And there are many examples of Roma women from Hungary indeed, who struggle to bring about policy changes through political activism at national and international levels. Livia Jaroka the first woman of Roma origin to be elected as the Member of European Parliament (since 2004), proclaimed that it is her primary ambition to raise awareness and understanding of Roma issues (Jaroka, 2006: 4). Agnes Osztolykan, Member of Hungarian Parliament, (Politics Can Be Different Party), who was recently awarded the 'International Woman of Courage Award', worked with the Decade Secretariat to develop action plans for gender inclusiveness; she has also been in the team of experts who prepare the Decade Watch report. Rita Izsak is a chief of staff for the Secretary of State responsible for social inclusion in the ministry of Justice and Public Administration in Hungary; she is also a National co-coordinator of the Decade. Ms. Izsak has been an active member of the Joint Roma Women's Network established by the Open

Society Initiative. I will discuss more on Roma women's activism at grassroots level in Hungary in chapter four.

1.3 Roma Politics in Hungary

During the state socialism, since the 1950s till the end of the regime policy approaches towards Roma changed from first being assimilative to being integrative in the mid 1970s (Swenden, Vermeersch 2002:5). Three core components shaped assimilation policy, employment in regular labor, housing and education. Further the change towards 'integration policy' lead Hungary into the direction of promoting politics of 'difference' (Swenden, Vermeersch 2002:5). With this approach Roma were given opportunity to promote their culture. The National Gypsy Council was set up in 1985. According to Swenden and Vermeersch this mechanism was developed with the view that instead of the state body directly working on integration of the Roma, a new body of Roma themselves could be created. Roma who wanted policy change could go through the legal channel. This led to the formation of a number of Gypsy Councils on county level (Swenden, Vermeersch 2002:5).

The policy focus towards Roma under post-state socialism was marked by the introduction of various new policies for Roma integration with little positive effect on the situation of Roma. In the beginning of the 1990s Hungary introduced the Minority act (1993). Under this legislation Roma got the opportunity to form municipal self-governments, and these municipal self-governments were to elect the National Gypsy Minority Self-Government (Swenden, Vermeersch 2002:6). The minority self-governments are restricted as they do not have power of authorities but its various bodies do have consultation and consent rights. Swenden and Vermeersch state

that in the late 1990s Roma-related Hungarian policy gradually changed, as there was an increasing tendency to introduce new institutions for dealing with the socio-economic and human rights concerns of the Roma communities (Swenden, Vermeersch 2002:7). The authors argue that this change can be attributed to international pressure on Central and Eastern European countries in the first place. At the same time research and advocacy institutions like ERRC reports show that despite various policy initiatives discrimination against Roma and specifically Roma women is still persistent (ERRC comments CEDAW 39th session, 2007:2).

The documents forming one core background of the development of Hungarian Roma politics in the last few years, which I will discuss in chapter three, are to be read against the background of the policy developments discussed above. These are the following documents: The Strategic Plan for the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015 approved as the Parliamentary resolution (68/2007, 28.6.2007) by Hungarian Parliament and the National Action Plan for 2008-2009 (1105/2007. 27.12.2007, Korm.). The National Action Plan for 2008-2009 is created for the implementation of objectives and tasks enumerated in the Strategic Plan in a time bound period.

“The Decade initiative is a direct outcome of the regional conference ‘Roma in an Expanding Europe: Challenges for the Future’ held in Budapest, Hungary, in 2003” (Decade 1st ISC Meeting, 2003:1). The governments of Hungary, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Macedonia, Romania, Serbia and Montenegro, and Slovakia endorsed the launch of the Decade of Roma Inclusion (Press release Decade of Roma Inclusion 2003).

The Hungarian government took the lead in preparing for the Decade, a process that took place during 2004. During 2004, governments, with the involvement of Roma and other stakeholders¹²,

¹² “The founding international partner organizations of the Decade are the World Bank, the Open Society Institute, the United Nations Development Program, the Council of Europe, Council of Europe Development Bank,

committed themselves to work together “to set the goals for the Decade and quantifiable targets for monitoring on both country and cross-country levels” (1st ISC Meeting, 2003:2). The other important tasks for the governments during the preparatory phase were, “identifying data requirements and monitoring mechanisms for the Decade initiative. Developing country level plans, policies and programs for reaching the targets and making estimation of resources needed” (Decade 1st ISC Meeting, 2003:2). In February, 2005, prime ministers of eight founding governments signed the Declaration of the Decade in Sofia, Bulgaria (Decade website).

The Decade initiative is a political commitment of twelve European governments to combat Roma poverty, exclusion, and discrimination within a regional framework (Decade Terms of Reference¹³, 2005:1). The Decade initiative as an international initiative the governments, intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations, and the Roma civil society are proposed “to work together for the welfare of Roma by including Roma in the decision-making process and to review the progress in a transparent and quantifiable way” (ToR, 2005:1). There are four priority areas enlisted in the Decade initiative, those are, education, employment, health, and housing. The governments should have special focus on the priority areas. In addition to that the government should “take into account poverty, discrimination, and gender mainstreaming as core issues” (ToR, Amended 2010:4).

Currently there are twelve countries participating in the Decade initiative, with Bosnia and Herzegovina, Albania and Spain having joined in later years, and with Slovenia holding an

the Contact Point for Roma and Sinti Issues of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the European Roma Information Office, the European Roma and Traveller Forum, and the European Roma Rights Centre. In 2008, UN-HABITAT, UNHCR, and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) also became partners in the Decade.” (Decade website)

¹³ Hereafter ToR, the Terms of Reference are the guiding rules of the Decade that explain the Decade functioning.

observer status¹⁴ (Decade website). Within the Decade framework each government has to prepare its National Action Plan based on the priority areas. Each partaking government has to hold the Decade Presidency at least once during the ten-year period. The Planning for the Decade initiative is guided by an International Steering Committee¹⁵; this Committee is the highest decision-making and co-ordination body (ToR, Amended 2010:7). The ISC in 2006 approved of the establishment of the Decade Secretariat as a technical support unit for the facilitation of the Decade (ToR, Amended 2010:7). The Decade Secretariat is a private foundation established by the Open Society Institute which mainly performs an administrative role in support of the Decade Presidency (ToR, Amended 2010:7). A Decade Trust Fund (DTF) has been established for the purpose of financing international activities within the Decade framework. The Trust Fund is administered by the World Bank. All Decade countries have to contribute to an initial amount of EUR 20,000. For each subsequent year the ISC decides on the amount of the annual contribution (ToR, Amended 2010:11). It is important to note that since the Decade initiative is a political commitment of the partaking governments, there is no legal obligation or checks and balance mechanism on the governments joining the Decade initiative. However there is an International Steering Committee (ISC), acting as the highest decision making body of the Decade initiative, which involves the international organizations and the Roma civil society.

The Hungarian Decade Strategic Plan promises that “Gender equality is foreseen to be effectuated via the tasks and measures connected with the four priority areas” (Strategic Plan 2007:3). By formally acknowledging the responsibility towards integrating gender as the core

¹⁴ “Governments intending to participate in the Decade and international organizations can participate as observers at International Steering Committee meetings and workshops until their decision to participate in the Decade” (ToR, Amended 2010:4)

¹⁵ “International Steering Committee is made up of representatives of participating governments, Roma organizations, international donors, and other international organizations” (ToR Amended 2010: 7)

issue in the Decade priorities, the Hungarian state has committed itself to promote gender equality in the priority areas of the Decade initiative.

Chapter 2: Analytical Framework and Research Design

After having discussed ‘Roma and Roma politics in Hungary’, in this chapter, first I will talk about what this research study aims at, i.e. the objectives of the research, and further I will elaborate on the lines of inquiry i.e. the research questions applied to achieve the objectives of this study. In the next section I will lay down the analytical framework, i.e. the conceptualization and theories used in this study. I am applying Gender Analysis and Intersectionality theory for this study. In the last section of this chapter I will put forward the research design, describing the methods used for the research and the research process.

2.1 Research Objectives and Research Questions

I aim to study the gender inclusiveness in the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015 in Hungary. For this purpose I conduct gender and intersectional analysis of the Decade NAP in Hungary for the four priority areas enumerated in the Decade resolution, i.e. Education, Employment, Housing and Health. Based on the analysis of national level Roma politics and gender-sensitive Roma (women’s) activism I aim to put forth recommendations based on my own research as well as suggested by various stakeholders such as Roma women activist, academics, representatives of relevant governmental institutions, civil society actors and representatives of the Decade secretariat to enhance gender inclusiveness in the NAP of the Decade.

The lines of inquiry arise from the objectives of the study, thus following the main objective, the primary inquiry i.e. main research question will be to analyze, how gender is included in the Decade NAP of Hungary? Here I will study whether the tasks and measures enlisted in the NAP

address the specific exclusion of Roma women vis-à-vis Roma men and non-Roma women. I will further put forth the examples of gender aware Roma (women's) civil society. Finally, based on my analysis of Roma politics and gender aware Roma (women's) activism I will develop suggestions to enhance gender inclusiveness of the Decade NAP in Hungary.

2.2 Analytical Framework

'Gender analysis' of policy documents is a primary tool that I will be using to study the gender inclusiveness of Decade NAP for Roma Inclusion along with the intersectional analysis. Office of women's policy define Gender analysis as "an innovative process that enables government and non-government organizations to analyze whether proposed and existing policies, programs and services produce equally beneficial outcomes for diverse groups of women and men" (Office for women's policy 2005:5). Therefore gender analysis is important in order to study gender inclusiveness of the Decade NAP i.e. to study whether the objectives and tasks in the NAP equally benefit diverse groups of Roma men and women.

Women are not a monolithic whole, their experiences are shaped by different social categories such as race, class, age, disability and difference generated along these categories put women in an advantageous position or in a disadvantageous position. Feminist researchers have developed approaches such as Intersectionality to study the interaction of various different social categories shaping experiences of women in a distinct and specific manner. Intersectional analysis therefore explores different dimensions of women's identities and social position as influenced by their race, ethnicity, and class, arguing that the dimensions should be studied in an integrated manner. The gender and intersectional analysis are the tools to study various categories of differences together and not against each other.

Gender and intersectional analysis are very important in order to develop a holistic picture of discrimination and exclusion of Roma women. Gender and intersectional analysis are key instruments to analyze Roma women's multiple oppression taking place at various levels. A gender bias which intensifies with the ethnicity and class intersection is present in all the social institutions including that of national and international policy making institutions. Therefore I aim to conduct a gender and intersectional analysis of policies, including the Decade NAP and Roma (women's) activism so as to study the gender inclusiveness of the policies concerned.

Gender Analysis

According to March, Smyth and Mukhopadhyay Gender analysis "explores and highlights the relationships of women and men in society, and the inequalities in those relationships, by asking, who does what? Who has what? Who decides? How? Who gains? Who loses?" (March, Smyth, Mukhopadhyay, 1999:9). Further by posing questions such as 'Which men? Which women?' the analysis depicts the relationship of men and women from different social categories like, class, race, age and so on (ibid).

March, Smyth and Mukhopadhyay emphasize that "Gender analysis breaks down the divide between the private sphere (involving personal relationships) and the public sphere (which deals with relationships in wider society). It looks at how power relations within the household interrelate with those at the international, state, market, and community level" (March, Smyth, Mukhopadhyay, 1999:9). Thus gender analysis is about indentifying, analyzing and eliminating unequal relationships between men and women in the private and more importantly in the public sphere. Gender analysis, among other things, gives evidence on how policies affect

women and men differently and therefore it is a basis for policy oriented analysis and for the development of policy suggestions.

In the context of this study the focus on gender analysis is important because the specific identities of Roma women should not get subsumed in the broader Roma politics i.e. Roma women vis-à-vis Roma men and it should not get subsumed in a larger feminist politics in Hungary i.e. Roma women vis-à-vis non-Roma women. Gender analysis is a generic term that describes a process or a set of processes for analyzing policies, existing or in a formation stage to encourage the development of gender inclusivity and gender sensitivity (Bacchi, Eveline, Binns *et al.*, 2010: 64). Thus gender analysis is both theoretically and politically important to this study as gender analysis aims towards gender equality, which this study envisions.

Bacchi, Eveline, Binns emphasize that gender analysis requires that gender equality becomes a guiding principle in the development of any policy, program or project. Even though gender analysis is not about antidiscrimination in the legal sense i.e. not carried out in the courts, it analyses every component of the legal machinery of government (Bacchi, Eveline, Binns *et al.* 2010:64). The authors further state that with this understanding, “gender analysis is an intervention aimed at identifying policies and laws that can contribute to the elimination of discrimination in the substantive sense” (ibid). This study envisions that the examples of gender inclusive civil society policies and actions and the recommendations produced in this study will serve as a tool for making Roma women’s policy gender inclusive.

Gender analysis goes beyond focusing on the access to equal opportunities as it envisions reshaping organizational structures to benefit both men and women equally. Resulting in mainstreaming, gender analysis leads policies to shift their focus to the transformation of

institutions, and in this way goes beyond just improving access of women in strategic position (Bacchi, Eveline, Binns *et al.* 2010:65). Policies that are specifically introduced for Roma should have this transformational agenda to benefit both Roma men and women equally. As discriminated ethnic minority it is of even more importance that the policies for Roma have the transformational characteristic that target institutional change.

Bacchi, Eveline, Binns *et al.* cite Ailwood to describe policy processes as consisting of “uneasy, messy settlements, requiring strategic compromises, resistances and defences” (Bacchi, Eveline, Binns, *et al.* 2010: 65). The authors make an important point that the complex policy process should be transformed into nuanced discussion which can then challenge simplistic understandings of gender and strengthen analyses of how gender intersects with a range of other factors (*ibid*). The authors at this point also talk about intersection of other factors that are important in gender analysis, a theme I shall discuss in the next section. The rethinking of policy approaches is crucial for widening welfare for the larger society. Gender analysis and analysis of other intersecting factors generates this rethinking.

Intersectionality

“Intersectionality is a theory and a paradigm for sociological and cultural studies that conceptualize the cultural and social patterns of oppression as integrating race, gender, class, ethnicity, sexual orientation and disability” (Pantea, 2009: 37). This theory dates back to the late 20th century north American Black Feminist Movement. The term intersectionality refers to various social divisions that position groups or individuals in advantageous or disadvantageous situations, depending on the interrelationships of differences such as gender, race, class and ethnicity. The Intersectionality perspective emerged from a context of intersections between

feminist theories, and, in particular, postcolonial theory, and black feminist theory (Lykke, 2005:3)

Conceptualization of intersectionality has an even longer and complicated history in feminist thought (Lykke 2005). This history dates back to 19th century anti-slavery movement where Black feminists indentified the crucial gender and race nexus and in 20th century socialist women's movement found class and gender as factors creating double burden on women. Intersectionality was first used by critical race theorist Kimberle Crenshaw in 1989 when she discussed the issues of black women's employment in the US (Davis, 2006:193).

In the words of Nina Lykke "The concept of intersectionality has been used in different kinds of feminist theorizing as a tool to analyze, how socio-cultural hierarchies and power differentials, which produce in/exclusion around discursively and institutionally constructed socio-cultural categories such as gender, ethnicity, race, class, sexuality, age/generation, nationality etc. interact" (Lykke, 2005:2). Lykke revisits her definition following feminist physicist and philosopher Karen Barad and replaces "inter-act" by "intra-act". "Intra-action refers to interplay between non-bounded phenomena, which interpenetrate and mutually transform each other, while interplaying" (Lykke 2005:2). Inter-action according to Barad happens between two bounded entities, clashing against each other but without initiating mutual transformation. Lykke further stresses that intersectionalities between gender, race and class are processes of mutual construction and transformation (ibid).

When social categories are analyzed to be interacting rather than intra-acting they are seen as separate structures and the analysis fails to view the mutual construction of those social categories. In the context of Roma women, if concerns of Roma women are analyzed only from the ethnicity point of view or only from the gender point of view, the mutual transformation of ethnicity and gender is neglected. As a result the specific concerns of Roma woman get subsumed either in the gender category or ethnicity. As opposed to this intersectionality based analysis is very crucial in order to provide means to deal the multiple with marginalization of different groups and individuals.

Author Angela Kocze, in her research on ‘missing Intersectionality’ written in the context Roma women of Europe states that “intersectionality and the notion of multiple discrimination has offered a language for Romani women activists to speak about their experiences with both racism and sexism, of which they have become aware as members of the Roma movement and in their interactions with majority women’s movements emerging in different countries” (Kocze, 2009:21). Kocze further emphasizes that the intersectional approach is merely a possibility for Romani women activists (ibid). This is so, according to Kocze, because Roma women activists are still exploring the categories for the analysis of Roma women’s situation.

Kocze acknowledges that the situation of Romani women has been described in scholarship in various ways in a number of ways including concepts such as “double discrimination, double marginalization, multiple disadvantages, or multiple discrimination” (Kocze, 2009:21). She argues that research using these terms tend to mainly consider gender and ethnic dimensions of discrimination and leave out the dynamics of poverty and exclusion (ibid). In her view however,

the analysis of the situation of Roma women cannot be completed if the class dimension is left out.

2.3 Research Design

In this section on Research design I will describe the study design and methods employed for this study. Research design is a logical structure of inquiry. De Vaus states that “the function of a research design is to ensure that the evidence obtained enables us to answer the initial question as unambiguously as possible” (De Vaus, 2001: 9). The research design for the qualitative research follows from or is guided by the research objectives and the research questions and therefore I decided on the method to collect data after I formulated the questions and objectives.

Sampling

My research questions required that I gather information about gender inclusiveness of the Decade NAP and Roma (women’s) activism, I primarily used desk research and did a gender and intersectional analysis of the tasks and measures enlisted for the priority areas in the Decade NAP in Hungary. I also analyzed studies that included a focus on gender as well as documents related to Roma (women’s) activism.

Further to substantiate my analysis I gathered evidences from the field, for this I decided to interview Roma women activists, academics, representatives of relevant governmental institutions, representatives of relevant intergovernmental bodies on the regional and European level; in the interviews I asked questions on whether or not the Decade NAP effectively include gender in the Decade priority areas. I also inquired about suggestions from the experts on how to

enhance the gender inclusiveness of Decade NAP. Thus the interviews with experts were very important for this study¹⁶.

I decided on purposive (non-probability) sampling for the data collection. As for this study I wanted to talk to Roma and non- Roma women experts from various levels working with the gender perspective on the issue of Roma. It was difficult to identify such actors since I am not from Hungary, hence I began with the sources I had identified and used snow balling technique to get contacts of other experts in the field.

The research plan was kept flexible as every interview lead to an important finding with which the research was developing. I didn't fix on the number of interviewees¹⁷ due to the use of snow-balling technique to find my interviewees. In the process I identified and could take fifteen interviews altogether. My primary channel to know and to get contacts of potential interviewees was during the European conference 'Roma Women in Focus' organized in Budapest on 7th of April by the European Women's Lobby and the Hungarian Women's Lobby. For this conference a good number of Roma women activists, academic experts on Roma issues, and representatives of relevant governmental institutions as well as representatives of relevant intergovernmental bodies on the regional and European level were present.

I interacted with the people who were involved in the organizing of the conference, and one of them, Lidia Balogh, helped me in getting contacts of Roma women's organizations and Rom women activists in Hungary. Further Jai Bhim Network¹⁸ (JBN) a Roma Rights organization in Miskolc, Sajokaza provided contacts of government representatives. After this initial support in

¹⁶ See also the Annex II for the list of interviewees.

¹⁷ In this paper even though there are no quotations used to indicate what the interviewees have said I either directly reproduced or paraphrased the quote very closely to what interviewees have said.

¹⁸ Hereafter JBN, during my previous studies in Central European University in 2008 I have volunteered in JBN and during August 2009 to December 2009 I did an internship in JBN.

building contacts with interviewees, these interviewees provided me the contacts of experts who could be potential interviewees. Most of my interviewees are from Hungary with an exception of three interviewees. I did semi-structured interviews with all the interviewees.

Semi-structured Interviews

Konate and Sidibe define semi-structured interviews based on excerpts of the guide on qualitative research as aiming “to obtain points of view, reflections and observations of people who have specialized knowledge, a particular status or position, information that the researcher cannot obtain elsewhere” (Konate, Sidibe, n.d). The ‘interview guide¹⁹’ i.e. a written list of questions or themes are prepared beforehand. Among the various types of semi-structured interviews, I used depth/focused interviews, the purpose of which is “to gain complete and detailed understanding of the topic” (Konate, Sidibe, n.d).

The reasons for conducting semi-structured focused interviews were, firstly efficiency, as in most cases the interviewees had time constraints and they had fixed time limit of an appointment. Secondly in these onetime interviews I wanted to gather the largest possible amount of relevant information useful for my paper. Thirdly, about six of the interviewees asked for a questionnaire or guideline before the interview to know what information I was expecting from them. Lastly, the preparedness was also useful in taking notes as the answers were mostly concise due to the focused questions. The interviews were recorded on a digital recorder and interviewees were asked for the permission before starting the interviews.

¹⁹ See Annex I for the interview guide of the interviews used for this study

Chapter 3 Aren't Roma Women²⁰ Women too?

In this chapter the analysis will focus on two main documents of the Decade initiative for the analysis, those are Decade Strategic Plan (2007) and two years National Action Plan (NAP) 2008-2009 of Hungary, passed in 2007 (see also section 1.3). I will analyze the objectives and tasks enlisted for the four priority areas in these two documents from gender and intersectional perspectives.

Gender equality is enlisted as a core issue in the Decade initiative. The Strategic Plan of Hungary envisions gender equality to be implemented through the tasks enumerated for the priority areas. However studies show that the issues of gender are neglected in the Decade framework (Peric, 2007:3). The term 'Roma women' appears only once in the NAP of Hungary under the "tasks relating to the promotion of mainstreaming of equal treatment and antidiscrimination" (NAP, 2007:12). Thus it appears that even though a crosscutting theme for all the policy priority areas, gender equality is only mentioned in the context of equal treatment.

The Strategic Plan enumerates briefly the situation of Roma in Hungary first and describes the plan of action as per the Decade themes designated as priority areas, i.e., Education, Employment, Housing and Health care. While the Strategic Plan document provides information on the situation of the Roma in general it does not show the intrinsic link between the priority areas of the Decade, which perpetuate the cyclical exclusion of Roma. For instance the document

²⁰ This title is inspired by the famous speech "Aint I a Woman?" by Sojourner Truth, an African-American Abolitionist. I chose this particular title for this chapter because I observed in many researches and studies Roma are considered to be a gender neutral category. Roma and Women are not mutually exclusive categories, especially in the policies identity and specificity of Roma women gets subsumed. The first part of the title "aren't Roma women" means that the larger women's movement in Europe should recognize Roma women's status. The 'too' in the end specifies that being a Roma woman is as much gender as ethnicity.

states that “the proportion of Roma children transferred to educational institutions established for slightly mentally disabled children is the double of the national average” (Strategic Plan 2007: 2). The civil society researches show that this mostly happens due to the stigma and hostility against the Roma community²¹. There is a visible link between school segregation, residential segregation, unemployment and no proper health care while the document looks at these dimensions in isolation. In formulating a policy to abolish social exclusion, it would be very important that the policy documents should comprise analysis of the forms of social exclusion and their intersection that produce more vulnerability to the excluded groups.

In the forthcoming analysis of the core document of the Decade initiative in Hungary, Strategic Plan and NAP, it can be seen that the documents show a lack of gender and intersectional perspective in each of the Decade priority areas. To substantiate this finding I read these Decade documents against a few studies that explicitly focus on gender. In the first sub section I will talk about how gender inclusive the Decade Strategic Plan is in the field of education.

3.1 Education

The Strategic Plan enlists the main objective and tasks to fulfill the objective in the field of education of Roma. The Strategic Plan aims at “expanding the scope of integrated education, the effectuation of desegregated schooling i.e. dissolution of all segregated classes and schools and elevation of the qualification of Roma people” (Strategic Plan 2007:5). The Plan further enlists the tasks to be administered for increasing numbers of schools with preparative activities required for integration. However the Plan does not clearly put forth the measures to be taken for

²¹ Discussion with the president of the Chance for Children Foundation, Hungary Mr. Andras Ujlaky during the meeting in JBN, Sajokaza on 14th of April 2011

encouraging Roma girls to continue schooling. The Plan does not focus on the specific reasons why Roma boys and girls drop out. By contrast Pantea writes about the “gender disparity and complex factors involved in low enrollment and dropouts (low education attainment) of Roma girls” (Pantea, 2009:5). Pantea states that the gender disparities affecting education of Roma women are linked with “customs and values of the community, poverty in the family, as well as with structural constraints and the policy ineffectiveness” (Pantea, 2009:5).

In the interview Derdak Tibor, the founder of Jai Bhim Network, who also teaches in the Ambedkar high school founded by Jai Bhim Network, shared that in order to involve young Roma girls in the school we have to consider various dimensions. In the traditional Roma community for instance, there is a high rate of early marriages and early child bearing or even as a gender role the young Roma girls have to take care of their younger siblings which leads to drop out particularly among the Roma girls. Therefore schools should be equipped with crèches in order to encourage young Roma mothers and Roma girls with caring responsibility of children to attend school (Interview Derdak, 15th May 2010).

The distance of school is one of the reasons mentioned in a Roma women’s conference held recently in Budapest²². The distance of school especially affects girls from traditional Roma community, because young girls often are not allowed to travel alone due to patriarchal values and also because of the fear and insecurity. Pantea lays down issues such as “lower expectations exerted upon Roma girls and the poor level of teachers’ preparation to deal with multicultural

²² The European Women’s Lobby and the Hungarian Women’s Lobby organised a European conference on Roma women in Central and Eastern Europe on 7th April 2011 in Budapest. The speaker Szilvia Labodane Lakatos, assistant lecturer University of Pecs Faculty of Humanities, Institute of Education Department of Gypsy Studies mentioned that in certain places where there is high Roma population the closest school is 80 Km away.

(and gender issues) related to Roma” also as reasons for drop out (Pantea, 2009:15). Further Pantea states that the “gender stereotyping curricula that do not value Roma women and girls’ contributions or are in conflict with traditional culture” low attainment of school of Roma girls (Pantea, 2009:15).

Poverty in the Roma families and communities affect Roma men and Roma women differently. Young Roma boys drop out in order to enter into informal work, whereas Roma girls from poor families drop out due to the familial responsibilities of domestic work and caring work especially the eldest girl child who has to assume mothering role to look after younger siblings (Pantea, 2009: 15). To put it in Pantea’s words “strong gender segregation in Roma communities affects Roma women’s education”(ibid), as Roma girls drop out due to familial responsibilities and Roma boys to enter into labor market.

Kertesi and Kezdi explain that the low level of education amongst Roma lead to discriminatory employment for Roma. The authors provide statistics on the average national primary school completion rate in Hungary. This rate shows that 97 percent of males born after the 1950s completed primary school. 80 percent of Roma males born after 1960s completed primary school. Roma women reached this rate after 20 years (Kertesi, Kezdi, 2009: 15). This shows that it took 20 years for Roma women after Roma men to achieve the average national rate for primary education. This backlog of low education made Roma women more vulnerable and constrained them to Blue collar unskilled jobs in informal sectors.

In section 3.2, on employment, we can see that Roma women's employment rates are distinctly lower than that of Roma men and non-Roma women. If one of the reasons for low employment rate can be attributed to low level of education, it can also be argued that non-Roma women are better educated than Roma women and this contributes to in their higher level of employment than both Roma men and Roma women.

We have seen above that Roma women's low level of education is due to many factors. The low attainment of education is itself a manifestation of larger societal problems specifically faced by Roma women what further leads to the problem of unemployment. Low level of education has various consequences of on Roma women, such as dependency of mostly male members of the family due to which Roma women are not involved in decision making, they are ignorant of issues related to or have lack of control over sexuality and reproduction, this leads to early child bearing and numerous pregnancies which deteriorates the health of Roma women. This cyclical vulnerability needs to be understood and tackled in Roma policy and in order to achieve this goal gender and intersectional analysis of low attainment of schools by Roma and specifically Roma women is needed.

Read against these backgrounds it becomes clear that the Strategic Plan does not provide holistic measures to solve problems specifically faced by Roma women. The Strategic Plan aims at desegregation measures; laying down its tasks in the field of education, it talks about an equal level of education for Roma children in public education as goal. In addition, The Strategic Plan mentions following as the important tasks to be carried out: "the framing and improvement of anti-discrimination elements, alternative methods of informal education, education promotion of

equal opportunities, fundamental human rights, Roma folk studies and culture in education, encouraging Roma (Romani and Beas) languages, training and employment of the Roma Pedagogues” (Strategic Plan 2007:7).

Two issues of focus emerge in the tasks under the Strategic Plan enumerated in the field of education, first, desegregation that relates to reducing differences between Roma and non-Roma and second, promotion of language and culture. The gender dimension is not included in the tasks enlisted in the field of education. The Strategic Plan also creates biased measures that could discourage Roma women from coming to school. As stated before due to conservative customs young Roma girls are generally not allowed to travel to school located on a long distance and they end up discontinuing school. One of the tasks enumerated in Strategic Plan is to encourage disadvantaged young adults into public education through the means of alternative, informal education (Strategic Plan 2007:6). One of the measures to fulfill this task is to campaign for the inclusion of young Roma in Public education through evening schools and secondary correspondence education (ibid). Yet young Roma women from disadvantaged communities are not likely to attend the evening school for the reasons stated above. In order to overcome these gendered biases the Strategic Plan would need to closely look at, first of all the gender dimensions of reasons affecting Roma women’s education and secondly the intersecting factors such class and ethnicity.

When discussing in the following sub-section, the area of employment I will draw the link between education and employment and emphasize that the Strategic Plan should link these two areas to formulate the plans/programs and policies.

3.2 Employment

In the field of employment the principle objective of the Strategic Plan is to facilitate the Roma people's integration in the labor market in association with their training and retraining, as well as the improvement of the level of Roma people's employment (Strategic Plan, 2007:9). In the Strategic Plan, Roma women are mentioned in two areas, namely Employment and Health Care. In the field of employment, the Strategic Plan talks about positive discrimination to increase the rate of Roma women's employment (Strategic Plan, 2007:9). The Plan puts forth measures to be taken for the "promotion of employment for women (including Roma women) returning from child-care allowance and child-care fee e.g. establishment of flexible forms of employment and vocational trainings, as well as the facilitation of proper access to them by maintaining and improving the existing programs that offer employer benefits in the payment of contributes" (Strategic Plan 2007:10). As the Strategic Plan restricts itself to this perspective, it neglects two problems by which Roma women are distinguished from other groups.

First, in Hungary the childcare costs benefits are dependent on insurance (Social Security Programs in Hungary²³, 2004). The Social Insurance Program for maternity benefits in Hungary covers cash maternity benefits (childcare costs) for "all pregnant employed or self-employed women who have worked for at least 180 days in the 2 years before childbirth" (Social Security Programs in Hungary, 2004). So, women who are employed prior to childbirth benefit from the child-care allowance and child-care fee and the Strategic Plan offers related opportunities for employment to Roma women who have benefitted from the child care allowance and child care fee.

²³ Social Programs Throughout the world 2004, U.S. Social Security Administration, Office of Policy website.

Yet Roma women are mostly engaged in unpaid domestic work or/and informal care work before having children. Therefore to which they cannot avail of the childcare allowance and will not get employment opportunity enumerated in Strategic Plan because the Plan excludes Roma women who have not availed of child-care allowance. Roma women who were unemployed prior to give birth will not be able to access to the positive discrimination enlisted in the Strategic Plan. The focus on women returning into labor market alone discriminates against Roma women as compared to non-Roma women.

The second problem is related to fact that the measure focuses exclusive on “employing” Roma women. Staying at home is not considered a valuable option for Roma women. Their unaccounted domestic work is thus not considered as contribution to the development and well-being of the society. Yet Roma women bring up more children and are engaged in child rearing responsibilities, their return to labor market is restricted by this fact. Poor Roma women specifically end up opting for employment in the informal sector where they work long hours with low or no social benefits (Pantea, 2009:22).

Kertesi and Kezdi write that “according to the Hungarian Census, the employment rate of 16-64 year old population was 72 per cent in 1980, 66 per cent in 1990, and 53 per cent in 2001. The authors summarize Svejnar’s argument stating “by the mid-1990’s Hungarian employment rates reached levels that were low in international comparison, even among post-communist countries” (Kertesi, Kezdi 2009: 8). The noteworthy point is that even though female employment in Hungary decreased together with male employment, it never went below the

OECD average, and by 2003, it increased slightly above with 58 percent (ibid). This means that women's employment rate in Hungary was at par with international employment rate.

Kertesi-Kezdi's study "analyzed the extent causes of the low formal employment of Roma in Hungary" (Kertesi, Kezdi 2009:2). The study results show that "the employment of Roma in Hungary dropped significantly in the first years of the post-communist transition and remained unchanged by macroeconomic conditions later" (Kertesi, Kezdi 2009:2). Kertesi-Kezdi give statistics of Roma employment, "by 1994; Roma employment was below 30 per cent among men and to 17 per cent among women, which did not improve. By 2003, employment of Roma men was at 32 per cent, and that of Roma women stayed at 17 per cent. The difference between Roma and national employment rate was at 36-37 percentage points in 1994. It increased to 40 percentage points by 2003 because of rising employment of the non-Roma but not for the Roma" (Kertesi, Kezdi 2009:8). The authors further state that the ethnic gap which had reached 37 percent points in 1994, widened further due to the increase in the employment of non-Roma however no significant changes in the employment of Roma could be traced (ibid). From the ethnic gap and employment rate data we can conclude that non-Roma men and non-Roma women had reached the OCED national average by 2003. Non-Roma women in fact did better by achieving 58 percent of employment rate but Roma women remained at the lowest of the employment rate with 17 percent.

According to Kertesi-Kezdi "more than a third of the employment gap is explained by lower education of the Roma, and geographic location, while different from non-Roma, explains little once education is controlled for" (Kertesi, Kezdi 2009: 3). This means that the education of Roma would enable them to access jobs despite of the fact that they had to be geographically located in remote areas yet. This finding needs to be quantified. At the Roma women's

conference held in Budapest on 7th April 2011, Roma woman activist and member of European Parliament Livia Jaroka provided evidences for job discrimination against the Roma community. Jaroka stated that there are 8000 unfilled places for nurses for which, she suggested, Roma women especially could be trained and recruited (Jaroka, 7th April, 2011). Jaroka further noted that even though many young Roma men and women had a diploma that would qualify them for better jobs these youth were employed on jobs such as cleaning toilets in Railways. According to Jaroka the employment of Roma should be prioritized as a state agenda. This information underlines that the development of Roma unemployment is not simply part of the overall development in the field of employment. There should be political will and state willing to take employment of Roma as priority.

In her article Alexandra Oprea writes that “the marginalization of Roma women must be understood in the context of both sexism and racism” (Oprea, 2003: n.d). The first thing that Oprea critically points out is the lack of disaggregated data available on Roma women specifically. She writes “that statistics often refer to ‘women’ and ‘Roma’ as though they are mutually exclusive categories” (Oprea, 2003: n.d). Oprea cites an example from the World Bank report that shows the gender gap in employment Romania. The report however states that “the discrimination against Roma can be conceived in terms of job access rather than wage offers” (Oprea, 2003 n.d.). Oprea stresses that the report asserts that women suffer from wage discrepancies and Roma do not. In the report women are assumed to be all Romanian women and Roma are assumed to be all Roma men. The specificity of Roma women is neglected and therefore the report does not analyze “whether or not Roma women suffer both from wage discrepancies and a lack of job access” (ibid). There is an intrinsic link between race/ethnicity

and gender and this link is missed out in various studies, researches and policy documents related to Roma.

3.3 Housing

The Strategic Plan document talks about the adverse living conditions of the majority of Roma people who live in the micro-regions of the country that are afflicted with economic, infrastructural and employment disadvantages. The document emphasizes that in the past decade, the segregation in the housing and settlements of Roma and non-Roma people has increased, and tens of thousands of Roma families live in segregated, slummed housing circumstances in segregated blocks, apartments without comfort facilities (Strategic Plan 2007: 3). The document does not give data on segregated housing. Gender disparity in housing is not mentioned in the document and also there are no measures enumerated to achieve gender equality in the area of housing.

Koszeghy in his study on ‘Housing Conditions of Roma and Travelers’ in Hungary, states that “housing-related legislation and most public policies do not target Roma people (or any specific group of Roma, such as women, children, the elderly and persons with disabilities)” (Koszeghy, 2009: 1). He further states that these policies and legislation focus groups of low social status in general. Since Roma are strongly overrepresented among the low-status population, it can be interpreted that the policies should address both Roma and non-Roma people fall in the low-status group.

Koszeghy's study shows that the political and economic changes of 1989-1990 have impacted the legal and policy framework of housing. He states that as a result of mass privatization in the first half of the 1990s, the proportion of public tenements in Hungary became among the lowest in Europe, which is approximately 4-5 per cent of flats. Koszeghy stresses that the low proportion of public rental flats is the primary factor that prevents formulation and implementation of any socially responsible social housing policy. This again affects Roma the most as they are overrepresented in the low-status households (ibid).

Coming to the Strategic Plan, in the field of housing its main objective is "to achieve a large-scale reduction of segregation in the villages and regions" (Strategic Plan 2007: 13) In order to achieve this objective, there are tasks and required measures under each particular task elaborated in the Strategic Plan²⁴. From the objectives of the Strategic Plan and the tasks enumerated in the NAP for the years 2008-2009, it can be seen that the main focus of both documents is the reduction of segregation and the creation of housing in an environment that will provide facilities for education and employment for Roma people. The indirect beneficiaries of these facilities can be Roma women even though the documents do not include a clear action plan that would address the specific handicap of Roma woman due to inadequate housing as well as inadequate housing legislation.

²⁴ These include, implementation of complex goal programs for the acceleration of the social integration of people living in settlements or settlement-like environment; complex development of the most disadvantaged regions densely populated with Roma people; creation of properly differentiated financing conditions of public services; involvement of people having low incomes (or no incomes) into the rental housing and social housing program, improvement of access to benefits in cash and benefits in kind aimed at the preservation of housing facilities; and flexible transformation of the system of subsidy for home building of residential purposes primarily towards the creation of the potentials of mobility (Strategic Plan 2007).

To give an example of inadequate housing legislation affecting Roma families, the task number 2 of the NAP states that “regulation and implementation procedures to be applied against those arbitrarily moving into flats and services provided by the social system (social housing) and the child protection system should be revised so that the principle in the Act on the protection of children (according to which children may not be separated from their families due to financial reasons only) can be enforced” (NAP, 2007:7). The tenants moving into flats without entitlements tend to be those that come from low-income group where Roma are overrepresented. The idea here is that Roma who have ‘arbitrarily moved in’ to the social housing would still be evicted but in this process the children of these evicted families would not be taken away from their families under the principle of child protection. Koszeghy emphasizes that in reality “Roma children disproportionately suffer from evictions, since evictions are more frequent among families with many children” (Koszeghy, 2009: 83); and, according to the experience of Koszeghy’s interviewees²⁵, the rights of children tend to be violated during evictions (ibid). In this sense principle of child protection is only restricted to child’s right to family but child’s right to adequate housing is not considered.

While Koszeghy’s study does not show the consequences of eviction on Roma women and the specific harassment they face, Pantea stresses that “the lack of housing promotes external (irregular) migration and young Roma girls experience a particular risk of being trafficked” (Pantea 2009:37). Pantea emphasizes that Roma women and men experience the situation of housing and land rights differently given their different gender roles and responsibilities.

²⁵ Koszeghy interviewed two governmental representatives and three civil society representatives: Governmental actors: Roma Integration Department of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor, Housing Department of the Ministry of Local Government. Civil society actors: RCRF, Autonomia Foundation and Legal Defense Bureau for the Rights of National and Ethnic Minorities (Hungarian NEKI) (Koszeghy,2009:10)

Consequently, problems and atrocities in this area affect Roma women and men differently (Pantea, M 2009: 34). Roma women for example get evicted upon the death of their husbands or in cases of divorce or separation, if the husband was not properly registered as owner (ibid). Pantea refers to Habitat International Coalition (HIC) study and states that “Roma women are at an increased risk of being evicted, and of getting hurt or abused in the process and have more difficulties in finding substitute housing; the ultimate consequence is homelessness among women and their dependants” (Pantea, 2009: 35). In addition, Pantea emphasizes that the bureaucratic and expensive legal inheritance procedures discourage women with poor education from deprived areas to legalize their tenure status (Pantea, 2009:35).

There are also practical examples of how Roma women are affected by eviction. Koszeghy discusses legal decisions in the Annex 2 of his study. The first housing discrimination case was filed with Equal the Treatment Authority (ETA)²⁶ in 2006/07. The Budapest Metropolitan Court gave a decision regarding housing discrimination by the local government of Ferencvaros. The ETA’s resolution²⁷ established that the local government of Ferencvaros violated the right to equal treatment and the right to dignity of a Romani woman while evicting her without prior notice, in her absence, causing also partial damage to her belongings. ETA prohibited the continuation of this unlawful practice (Koszeghy, 2009: 109). Koszeghy states that “the local government appealed against the resolution and a new process of investigation in the case was initiated. In the repeated procedure the ETA established that the method of eviction amounted to harassment, violated human dignity, and therefore such unlawful conduct should be prohibited” (ibid). This case shows that Roma women faced with harassment in the process of eviction are

²⁶ Full texts of ETA decisions are not publicly available, The case extracts can be found in Koszeghy (2009), Housing Conditions of Roma and Travellers [online]

²⁷ The proceedings were initiated by Roma Civil Rights Foundation (RCRF) (Koszeghy, 2009: 109)

likely to have to go through repeated procedures to attain justice. It is important to note that this is not likely the only successful case where the RCRF initiated the proceedings and provided support to a Roma woman. Pantea emphasizes that in most cases Roma women lack resources and support, such as time, information, political and economic power and qualification to act against the harassment and discrimination (Pantea, 2009: 76).

Koszeghy further states that according to the staff of the ETA “it is difficult to establish ethnic discrimination in housing cases or in the cases related to other areas of social life. In several cases the ETA suspected ethnic discrimination but it was only possible to establish discrimination on the basis of financial status” (Koszeghy, 2009: 109). This shows that ethnic discrimination is subtle and the legal mechanisms do not sufficiently spell out what ethnic discrimination would consist of. Similarly the legal mechanisms are often gender blind and in the example case discussed above the harassment of the Roma woman is only seen from ethnic point of view and her double discrimination as Roma woman is not addressed.

Pantea’s gender analysis of adequate housing for Roma specifies several components of rights to adequate housing. I will discuss one of these components which is not adequately addressed by the Strategic Plan or the NAP. Pantea makes a clear distinction between ‘adequate housing’ and ‘shelter’ by providing a definition of ‘adequate housing including also the rights to access to land, natural resources, livelihood and basic services, the right not to be evicted and the right of the elderly, sick or disabled to a home adapted to their special needs (Pantea, 2009: 32). The components used in Pantea’s gender analysis are created by UNHCR (1991). Those are: legal security of tenure (through owning or renting, individually or collectively); accessibility to

services, materials, facilities and infrastructure (including e.g. roads, education, land, water and healthcare) and location (not too far from civil services and livelihood); affordability (the expenses for housing should not cause deprivation of other rights); habitability (varies according to the local environment); accessibility (refers to physical accessibility); cultural adequacy (accordance to cultural needs of the specific group) (Pantea 2009 : 32)

I will now discuss the component which is not adequately elaborated in the Strategic Plan and is only briefly mentioned in the NAP namely, accessibility to services, materials, facilities and infrastructure (including e.g. roads, education, land, water and healthcare) and location. The main objective of the Strategic Plan in the field of housing is to achieve a large-scale reduction of segregation in the villages and regions. In this relation the Plan deals with the issues of location, i.e. the micro-regions which are cut off from social services and facilities but the adverse effects of lack of accessibility specifically experienced by Roma women are neither discussed nor are there measures enumerated that would aim at counteracting these effects.

There are, however, such specific problems of Roma women. In an interview conducted with Mr. Tibor Derdak, the founder of Jai Bhim Network, Roma rights organization in Miskolc (Sajokaza), Mr. Derdak discussed specific problems that women face in the segregated Roma settlement of Sajokaza. Sajokaza has one of the poorest Roma settlements. Most of the houses are surrounded by dumping ground. Mr. Derdak emphasized that the inadequate housing and inaccessibility to facilities such as water affects Roma women the most. As their traditional role requires them to work in the household the lack of facilities put an enormous burden specifically on them. In Sajokaza there are four water bore wells for approximately 500 houses. During the winter when it freezes many women fall and get injured when they go out to draw water. Mr.

Derdak further said that women do the laundry manually and that the lack of hot water facility makes them vulnerable to cough, cold and more severe disease like tuberculosis. (Interview Derdak, 15th May 2011) From the qualitative data it can be seen that the Strategic Plan and the NAP have not considered the gender disparity in the area of housing and its specific effects on Roma women.

3.4 Health

The Strategic Plan gives a general overview of the health conditions of Roma people. It states that the life expectancy of Roma people at birth is 10 years shorter than the national average, while the birth ratio is higher than the national average (Strategic Plan 2007:1). The Plan emphasizes that the regional, schooling, social, economic and social deprivation has substantially negative consequences on health and life quality (ibid). The Strategic Plan further enumerates tasks in the field of health care. The main objective is “to improve health conditions of Roma people, increase in the life expectance at birth, as well as improvement of their access to healthcare service systems” (ibid). While there is no reference to gender here, the ERRC study ‘Ambulance not on the way’ on health care states that “the efforts to promote Roma women’s health and access to health care are more fragmentary than the health policies for Roma in general” (ERRC 2006: 13). The ERRC study shows that “Roma women face gender-related discriminatory barriers and forms of abuse along with rejection on the ethnic grounds while accessing health care” (ERRC 2006:13). However the Strategic Plan does not emphasize the health conditions of specific vulnerable groups such as Roma women. The ERRC study in addition emphasizes that trafficking, violence and early marriage aggravates the vulnerability of Roma women’s health status (ERRC 2006: 38).

Pantea's study conducted on the Decade initiative countries shows "Roma women's increased incidences of chronic illnesses and increased rate of mental health illnesses, Roma women's poorer level of sexual, prenatal and maternal health, and their increased nutritional vulnerability" (Pantea 2009: 28-33). According to Pantea the low level of Roma inclusion in public health and the double discrimination of Roma women in the health care system make Roma women reluctant to seek healthcare. Early marriage and early and higher rate of child bearing amongst Roma women results in Roma women's vulnerability to low level of maternal and prenatal health (Pantea 2009: 28-33). Pantea's and ERRC study show that segregation in the health care system and the lack of a policy focus on Roma women are the reasons in particular for the low level of maternal and prenatal health.

In the interview with Maria Pantea, she explained that serious problems like maternal mortality rate and life expectancy of women haven't yet got enough attentions (Interview Pantea, 17th May, 2011). In her study Pantea emphasizes that across Central Eastern Europe, Roma women have lower life expectancies as compared to majority female populations, and higher rates of fertility, morbidity and mortality. Further early pregnancies increase the birth-related mortality of Roma (Pantea 2009: 28).

While talking about the discrimination in the health sector Pantea narrated an incidence that she heard from a migrant Roma woman from Spain who had come to Romania. This woman was seven months pregnant and she had not been to the doctor in Spain and visited a doctor in Romania for the first time. When she asked the doctor what she was expecting, a girl or a boy, the doctor told her to go back to Spain and ask the doctors in Spain. This indeed was a discriminatory statement (Interview Pantea, 17th May, 2011). In the ERRC study 'Ambulance

not on the way’ a representative²⁸ survey conducted in Hungary is referred to estimate the percentage of Roma facing discriminatory treatment in hospitals. According to the survey “25% of the interviewed Roma reported having faced discriminatory treatment in hospitals and other health care institutions, and 44.5% reported discriminatory treatment by general practitioners” (ERRC 2006: 41). There is however no sex-disaggregated data enumerated in this regards.

In Hungary the ERRC field research conducted in March 2003 show a range of gender differentiated issues including “sterilizations of Roma women without full and informed consent, racial segregation in hospitals and racially motivated physical and verbal abuse of Roma women in health care” (ERRC Joint Statement 10th April, 2003). In March 2003, in Hungary, the ERRC interviewed “forty-four Roma women and documented nine cases of sterilization, out of these four cases appeared to be conducted without full and informed consent” (ERRC Joint Statement 10th April, 2003). The ERRC, together with the Legal Defense Bureau for National and Ethnic Minorities (NEKI), became involved in litigation of one Roma woman who was sterilized in the year 2001 by inducing her to concede to the misleading and/or incomplete information (ibid). This Roma woman was finally compensated after 8 years of constant struggle²⁹ (ERRC News 24th Feb, 2009).

Even though coercive sterilization is a specific concern of Roma women the Strategic Plan does not enumerate any specific measures against coercive sterilization and Roma women’s segregation in health care. The Strategic Plan task 5 talks about improvement of the knowledge

²⁸ ERRC referred to this source: Delphoi Consulting. *Ciganyok Magyarországon – szociális-gazdasági helyzet, egészségi állapot, szociális, és egészségügyi szolgáltatásokhoz való hozzáférés*. Budapest, 2004, p. 62

²⁹ This case of coercive sterilization of Roma woman in Hungary was taken to CEDAW committee under the CEDAW optional protocol by the ERRC and the Legal Defence Bureau for National and Ethnic Minorities (NEKI)

and the level of information of Roma clients about their rights to healthcare services (Strategic Plan, 2007:16), however there is no specific emphasis on Roma women.

According to Pantea, “the NAPs of Hungary, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia and Croatia, demonstrate a minimum level of gender awareness, with few gender-disaggregated indicators, mainly in the area of maternal health” (Pantea, 2009:44). She further states that health risks are largely considered universal for Roma populations. The tasks enlisted in the NAP focus on addressing issues of regional disparity, ethnic discrimination but no task specifically focus on gender inequalities and intersectionality of class, gender and ethnicity. The demand for training of health professionals focuses on “multicultural programs for strengthening prejudice-free attitudes and anti-discriminatory practices but there is no focus on gender sensitivity” (Pantea, 2009:44).

Thus the NAP and Strategic Plan of Hungary do not focus on the consequences of the lack of gendered policies in the area of health care as well as consequences of low level of health for Roma women specifically. We will see in the section 3.5 that intersections of Education, Employment, Housing and Health produce consequences of cyclical nature, and in the chapter four we will see through the examples of grassroots activism and through the initiatives of international organizations what policy options have already been developed to change this situation.

3.5 Education, Employment, Housing and Health Intersecting With Each Other and With Regional Disparity

In previous sections we have already seen that there is an intrinsic link between educational attainment of Roma and their employment. Some issues of importance for the situation of Roma

women are located at the intersection for the all Decade priority areas. The intersection³⁰ of the Decade priority areas aggravates vulnerability particularly of Roma women.

Koszeghy emphasizes the regional disparities that deprive Roma of Education, Employment opportunities, health care system and ‘adequate housing’ (as defined in the housing section) in Hungary. According to Koszeghy, “in Hungary the territorial distribution of Roma is very uneven, and systematically differs from that of the total population. Roma are over-represented in underdeveloped, economically depressed areas of the country, especially in the north-eastern and south-western part of the country, with poorer access to workplaces, (quality) services, educational and healthcare institutions” (Koszeghy, 2009: 38). Regional segregation plays an important role in further intensifying the marginalization of Roma in the areas of education, access to health care system and employment.

Koszeghy provides quantitative data concerning the impact of housing conditions of Roma on their access to education, employment, and the highest attainable level of health. He writes “the systematically different settlement types and different regional distribution of the Roma population strongly impact on the right to education” (Koszeghy 2009: 46). In 2007 the Ministry of Education and Culture set a limit of minimum 15 students per class as condition to receive state financing. As a result 450 schools were merged with other schools and 33 schools were closed down. This affected Roma adversely as many dissolved schools were public schools in small villages mostly populated by Roma (Koszeghy, 2009: 48).

Further the inadequate housing and living in segregated settlements affect the education of Roma girls more, as discussed in the section on education the distance of the school from the settlement

³⁰ During a discussion about my thesis on 6th May 2011 (Academic writing session) a suggestion came up from my supervisor Prof. Zimmerman to include a section on the intersection of the four Decade priority areas.

can discourage parents from sending their adolescent girls to the school. As discussed in the housing section, frequent eviction affects schooling of Roma children, and migration from one place to another due to lack of adequate housing makes Roma women vulnerable to trafficking. Sex work related trafficking makes Roma women further vulnerable to sexual diseases and violence which has consequences on their health. Low levels of education have direct ill effect on the decision making power of the Roma women which intensifies with the lack of proper housing and secure employment.

In the employment section we can see that employment of Roma and specifically Roma women is significantly lower than the respective ratio for the whole population. The main factors explaining this are poor level of education of Roma, regional disparities and discrimination. Koszeghy writes about the impact of housing on the employment, the main issue here is the regional allocation (Koszeghy, 2009: 47). A research published in 2005³¹ shows that “approximately 200 villages, most of which are populated mostly by Roma, lack active workplaces and proper transport links which would enable residents to obtain a job outside the settlement” (Koszeghy 2009: 48).

In the case of Roma women inadequate housing i.e. a house with lack of facilities of water and laundry as concentrated in “remote areas” puts extra burden on household work. Long hours required in the household work and low education makes Roma women confined to part time informal jobs that lack security. Here I would like to mention a case shared by Maya in the interview. Maya spoke about a Roma women’s association called Romi³² in Granada, Spain

³¹ Koszeghy refers to G. Kertesi (2005) 'Ingazas a falusi Magyarországon. Egy megoldatlan probléma', in: *Közgazdasági Szemle*, Vol. XLVII., No. 10, pp. 775-798. (Koszeghy 2009: 48).

³² Romi was the first Romani women’s association established in Spain. It was established in January 1990 by Ms Fernandes. Ms Ostalinda Maya Ovalle, ERRC Women’s Rights Officer conducted interview with Ms Dolores

where the founder of the organization Ms Dolores Fernandez thought that Roma women should read and write and have driving license, and Ms. Fernandez started her work with these issues. Maya emphasizes that having driving license is very important for Roma women in Spain as one main source of income for many Roma women in Spain is street selling. The lack of driving license makes Roma women dependent on the male members of the family for running their business and thereby economically dependent (Interview Maya, 28th April 2011). This case shows that not only low education but lack of skills (here driving skills) and remoteness from market makes women dependent.

Pantea in her study refers to the UNDP report ‘At Risk: Roma and the Displaced in Southeast Europe’ of 2006, which states, that “double discrimination experienced by Roma women in the labor market prevents women from getting employment suitable to their education” (Pantea, 2009: 18). Discrimination and segregation and their intersection with all the discussed sectors make Roma women multiply disadvantaged. In the education section, I refer to Livia Jaroka who talks about Roma youths who despite of having diploma are employed in toilet cleaning jobs. Roma women are mostly involved in the unorganized service sector and cleaning jobs (Jaroka, 7th April, 2011).

Koszeghy documents the intersection of housing related inequalities with the right to the highest attainable level of health. He refers to a survey published in 2004 which states that “the access to primary care services for Roma is significantly worse than the average population and this strongly relates to spatial disparities” (Koszeghy 2009: 48). Survey data show that “18.6 percent

Fernandez who was one of the first Romani feminists in Spain. The interview is published in the ERRC Roma Rights Quarterly 2006, 4th issue.

of the Roma population lives in settlements without primary care physicians³³” (ibid). The ERRC study emphasizes that “along with ethnicity/race-induced inequality the gender-specific structure limits Roma women’s opportunities to highest attainable standards of health” (ERRC 2006: 38). The study states that the lack of equal opportunities to health care experienced by where Roma women is aggravated by the disadvantaged position of Roma women as compared to Roma men in education and employment (ERRC 2006: 38).

The intersection of education, employment, housing and health with each other and regional disparities has grave social consequences for Roma women. The multiple disadvantages alienate Roma women from the labor market, confine them to informal work and in many cases they are at risk of trafficking. Roma women lack decision making ability at societal level due to multiple disadvantages. Their political participation is hindered and this limits their control over community resources. This is a cyclical deprivation which renders Roma women disempowered in dealing with community members and with authorities and institutions.

In this analysis of all the priority areas and their intersection with each other and with regional disparity, we saw a number of inadequacies of the Decade Strategic Plan and NAP in addressing gender disparities in the priority areas that affect Roma women specifically. Nevertheless, the Roma women’s movement in Hungary and activism at the grassroots often networking with and supported by international organizations, is working towards changing this scenario. We will see some examples of this grassroots activism in the following chapter. The collective voices of civil society for gender inclusive policy reform, advocacy and the revision of national policy with the help of civil society actors may lead to the creation of more gender inclusive policies.

³³ Koszeghy refers to F. Babusik (2004) 'Hozzaferesi kulonbsegek az egeszsegegyi alapellatasban 1, Struktura es eselyegyenloseg', in: Esely, Vol. 15, No. 4, pp. 71-99 (Koszeghy 2009: 48)

Chapter 4: Gender Aware Roma Policy and Activism

In the previous chapter we saw that gender inclusion is largely missing from the Hungarian Decade Strategic Plan and the NAP. This chapter aims to show that gender aware Roma policy is possible in Hungary especially through civil society activism. I will give examples of the civil society organizations in Hungary and elaborate on what programs are being implemented for gender inclusion on this level. I will further explain why these organizations are effective in gender inclusion and what problems they face.

Some of the organizations discussed in this chapter specifically work on the issues of Roma women and some have projects targeting Roma women. Some organizations have projects focusing on the priority areas like health, education and some have plans to start income generating activities and self help group for saving money.

4.1 Roma Initiative

The Roma Initiative is an OSI program, which co-ordinates the Decade activities in all the countries part of Decade initiative (Interview Czinkoczi, 25th May 2011). The Roma Initiative program guides all OSI programs and grant making activities related to the Decade initiative (Roma Initiative³⁴). In an interview with Anita Czinkoczi (25th May 2011), Senior Program Officer of Roma Initiative, Budapest, Ms. Czinkoczi talked about the frame in which the Roma initiative functions. First, it focuses on changing negative attitudes, advocacy toward effective policy for Roma, support to the grassroots civil society and Roma women's empowerment. Ms. Czinkoczi further emphasized that all programs of the Roma Initiative include gender and

³⁴ The Roma Initiative Web Page

specific concerns of Roma women (ibid). In the following I will discuss the programs guided by the Roma Initiative and show the policy advocacy at the level of local governments to support the local Roma NGOs.

The Joint Roma Women's Initiative (JRWI) was one of the first programs of the Roma Initiative focusing on Roma women. JRWI was started in the year 1999 by the Network Women's Program of the Roma initiative. The JRWI no longer exists as the Roma Initiative changed its focus from establishing a network of Roma women activists at national and international level to strengthening Roma women's activism at grassroots level. The reason behind this change of focus was that Roma women at grassroots level are most vulnerable due to lack resources (Interview Czinkoczi, 25th May 2011).

In a case study on the 'European Roma Women's Movement' by Rita Izsak, she writes about JRWI and its work on the issue of Roma women's rights. Izsak states that JRWI "focused on developing policies on Roma women's issues, the integration of Roma women's perspectives into the mainstream Roma movement and worked to create links between Roma women and mainstream women's rights movements in Europe" (Izsak, 2009: 6). Izsak further stresses that "to build the movement, Roma women should find allies to talk about their problems inside and outside the Roma community" and therefore, JRWI focused on integrating Roma women's perspective in both Roma movement and women's movement nationally and internationally (Izsak, 2009:9). Izsak stresses that in Hungary women's organizations are not connected to Roma women's network. However based on her research she says that there is willingness for networking from the Hungarian women's organizations³⁵ (Izsak, 2009:9). Izsak in her article

³⁵ Hungarian Women's Lobby is a network of Hungarian women's organizations and three Roma women's organizations in Hungary are part of this network (Interview Czinkoczi, 25th May 2011).

emphasizes that JRWI “greatly influenced the Roma women’s rights agenda throughout Europe” (Izsak 2009: 5). According to Izsak the main achievement of JRWI was that it brought together Roma women activists working to promote the rights of Roma women at national and international levels.

In the period during which it was operational JRWI along with International Roma Women’s Network intervened in several sensitive issues, such as situation of Roma women refugees from Kosovo settled in Macedonia. JRWI started a ‘solidarity fund’ for these refugee Roma women, and wrote a letter to the head of the office of the UNHCR concerning the situation of refugee Roma women from Kosovo settled in Macedonia. JRWI conducted trainings and workshops aiming at the promotion of freedom of choice and gender equality in seven European countries. Izsak writes “JRWI also launched a project in 2006 to enhance the grassroots networking of Roma women in eleven European countries” (Izsak, 2009: 6).

Izsak in the interview stated that under the leadership of Nicoleta Bitu, Roma women activists decided to establish national focal points i.e. Roma woman activist will have the responsibility of analyzing policies that affect Roma women and advocate the change in the policy in their respective country. Izsak further states that the JWRI could not stabilize itself and although very effective the initiative ended due to the lack of financial support (Interview Izsak, 4th May 2011). The program such as JWRI that envisioned working at various levels such as establishing an international network of Roma women activists, national level advocacy groups and grassroots strengthening of Roma women could not be sustained due to lack of resources.

Nicoleta Bitu in the interview stressed that in order to have sustained efforts, Roma women's activists, including herself, have to generate resources themselves and that it is important to have ownership over the initiative started by a group of activists (Interview Bitu 8th April, 2011). With this perspective Nicoleta Bitu and Roma women activists who were part of JWRI have reestablished a network called ROMNIA on 6th April 2011, prior to the Roma women's conference held in Budapest. The Roma women activists of JWRI were involved in the preparatory phase of the Decade initiative and Bitu states that it was a result of their involvement that gender equality was included as a cross cutting issue in the Decade Plan (Bitu, 8th April 2011). Roma women's activists involved in the preparation of the Decade Plan hoped for a concrete policy action towards Roma men and women but the final Decade Plan did not enumerate concrete measures concerning Roma women (Interview Oszolykan, 9th May 2011)

The JRWI worked with the perspective to seek solutions for the problems of Roma women within and outside the Roma community. It consciously decided to work towards integrating Roma women's perspective into the Roma movement and the mainstream women's movement, nationally and internationally. JRWI's work focused on networking among Roma women's activists locally, nationally and internationally as well as policy advocacy for Roma women's rights. The Roma women activists from JRWI were involved in the Decade process too (Bitu, 8th April, 2011). This shows that gender aware strategies of Roma women themselves and the Decade NAP in Hungary can involve these experts for developing gender inclusive perspectives and action.

Since 2008 the Roma Initiative started a new program, the Roma Women's Empowerment Grant (RWEg) which approaches Roma women's concerns from a grassroots perspective. The aim is "to promote gender equality by empowering Roma women to take part in the processes affecting

their lives and by ensuring that the concerns of Roma women are addressed appropriately. Further it seeks to give voice to Roma women's concerns, stimulate civic engagement and to build local leadership skills in an inclusive and equitable way” (Roma Initiative). Every year RWEG accepts proposals from local level Roma, and specifically Roma women’s, NGOs from the countries involved in the Decade initiative.

One example of a RWEG Program described as successful by Ms. Czinkoczi is a Roma women’s NGO in Bulgaria³⁶ which focuses on young Roma girls living in segregated Roma communities. The NGO runs a mobile school Bus. Various awareness raising, entertaining and educational activities are conducted on the Bus for young Roma girls. These young Roma girls are taken to the capital for exposure visits. Various trainings are conducted with them to raise their awareness about the risks of trafficking. The purpose of this program is to prevent young Roma girls from involvement in trafficking (Interview Czinkoczi, 25th May 2011). This is an innovative example for education and awareness-raising of young Roma girls. We have seen in chapter 3 that young Roma girls from disadvantaged regions experience a particular risk of trafficking. Such program encouraging the education of Roma girls and raising awareness amongst them about these risks should be promoted by the Decade NAP.

Equal Chances against Cancer³⁷ is an operational program supported by the Roma Initiative. In Hungary women between the age of 45 to 65 have free access to mammography screening. However, in the disadvantaged settlements mostly populated by Roma, it is difficult to get the screening done and therefore this initiative was started (Interview Czinkoczi, 25th May 2011).

³⁶ Name not mentioned.

³⁷ American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee (JDC) and Susan G Komen for Cure started the Equal Chances against Cancer initiative in 2007 and OSI joined in 2008.

Under this program cancer specialists go to villages and Roma settlements from disadvantaged areas and conduct cancer screening for women. These activities are called ‘Health Days’.

The Roma Initiative used to co-ordinate its activities with the local NGOs like Colored Pearls.³⁸ Community leaders, Roma women who are part of the NGOs, as well as Roma men and women who are part of minority government are approached and they are given responsibility of disseminating information and implementing the Health Day by Colored Pearls. These leaders spread the word in the community and take charge of organizing the Health Day in their village. Although the main focus is Roma women’s cancer check up, most of the times there are other health checkups held not only for women but also for the whole family.

The Health Days are organized as a community gathering. Along with health activities, Roma initiative (with the help of local NGOs) also conducts cultural events, to spread the awareness and reduce stereotyping of Roma community by non-Roma. There were 38 Health Days held so far. Ms. Czinkoczi emphasized that the Days are instrumental in developing the capacity of local Roma women leaders to achieve recognition in their community (Interview Czinkoczi 25th May 2011).

Another Program currently operational is the ‘Mothers Centers’. This Program in Hungary is in its initial phase as it started in 2010. Ms. Czinkoczi states that the idea of Mother’s Center started in Germany. The Mother’s Center is a model for disadvantaged women and is spread across the world. The Mother’s Centers are the self-help groups organized by women themselves.

To establish a Mother’s Center in their respective communities Roma women participants are trained in Budapest. The trainings are called leadership development for the Roma women. For

³⁸ See section 4.2.

the initial period ten groups of two Roma women each from various local communities and organizations from Hungary are trained between the periods of March 2011 to June 2011. In the first phase three ‘Mother’s Centers’ will be started and the program will be extended to the other places in the second phase.

The pattern of Mother’s Center is the following. The local organization or women’s group organizes a meeting place where they can bring their children. Women take care of each other’s children in turns. The group functions with the idea that each member has useful skills which could be contributed for the benefit of the group. Women support each other in their work by coming together to the Mother’s Center which they have established themselves. In the gradual stage women can start their small entrepreneurial activity.

The purpose of starting this initiative for Roma women is Roma women have lack of social network this collective support is very important. Roma women are mostly engaged in domestic work and child caring this gives no time for themselves, The Mother’s Center can be a place where they can collectively share each other’s responsibilities. This is the place where Roma women can discuss the problems and issues of the community and can find solutions for themselves. Collectively Roma women can communicate their problems towards the school, municipalities or the health sector. Roma women can organize trainings for themselves. They can invite for instance health specialist to talk on various health related issues. This is the place where Roma women can organize (Interview Czinkoczi 25th May 2011, for all information on the Mother’s Centers).

When asked whether the focus on ‘motherhood’ wouldn’t simply reinforce the mothering role of Roma women in which they are already engaged Ms. Czinkoczi responded that Roma women

can pursue their own interests in the Mother's Center, they do not have to conform to the role of mother. The center is a place and opportunity to (re-)define themselves by discovering skills they do possess but which they were never able to discover before as they didn't have time and opportunity. They can use their skills in programs they take up in the Mother's Center. Roma women have the opportunity through this initiative to show within their family, the Roma community and majority society that they are capable and they can organize, initiate new activities and achieve the desired goals they have defined (Interview Czinkoczi 25th May 2011).

This focus on Roma women's development and on creating new opportunities for them by training and capacitating is a good example that should be included in the Decade NAP. One of the emerging plans of the Roma Initiative is to build an advisory group of Roma women experts. The group will have its first meeting on 8th June 2011. This advisory group will bring together Roma women activists from different international organizations such as ERRC and the Roma Education Fund. This group is created with a view to effectively implementing the initiatives for Roma women's empowerment. The Advisory group will advise the Roma Initiative regarding the focus and priorities of RWEG.

In sum it can thus be stated that while the OSI Roma Initiative, the co-founder of the Decade has a clearly gender aware agenda and pursues a number of well-designed related initiatives, it has obviously not been able to substantially bring to bear this agenda on the Hungarian Decade NAP.

When asked about the reasons for this mismatch Ms. Czinkoczi explained that in most cases decisions about priorities are taken at the level of local authorities and local government bodies, where there is no representation of Roma women. In addition the Decade initiative has no gender inclusive agenda. Therefore the Roma initiative works on both the levels to capacitate Roma

women at grassroots as well as by building an advisory group of experts for advocacy at the policy level (ibid.). Czinkoczi does not give a clear answer as to why the OSI Roma Initiative has not been able to translate the gender aware agenda on the Hungarian Decade Plan. She however states that grassroots mobilization and strengthening is crucial as decisions are taken on the local level, and for the policy change at the government level there should be advocacy.

In my own view the mismatch is due mainly to a lack of concentrated work in the field of policy advocacy for gender inclusion from the international organizations. We have seen that the JRWI network of Roma women activists could not function due to lack of resources. The JRWI if supported could have been a sustainable advocacy network and pressure group.

Last not least Ms. Czinkoczi stressed that the key for making the Decade gender inclusive is to consult Roma women from the local NGOs while defining the action, their involvement in the process is must in order to achieve gender equality (ibid). OSI's Roma Initiative has tried out some ways of putting this insight into activist practice.

4.2 Színes Gyöngyök Egyesülete (Coloured Pearls Association)

The Coloured Pearls Association was established in 2004 in Pecs, the major city of Baranya county in the south of Hungary. Mrs. Kelemen, a Roma woman activist herself, started the association in order to help Roma women in connection with their family and social roles, to offer them social, legal, and mental health guidance and to assist them to take active part in the social life (Organisation pamphlet in english language).

In the year 2006 the organization launched its first program called ‘Women’s Center’ which is funded by the Human Resource Development Operational Program³⁹ of the Ministry of Employment and Labor (HRDOP in Hungarian HEFOP/1.3.1-06/1). Kitti Baracsi, who works as a trainer, proposal writer and educationist for the Association describes the background as follows: “HEFOP aimed at supporting women to enter into the labor market through training them to become entrepreneurs”. The Women’s Centre supported Roma women through counseling activity and trainings. Some of the women have established small entrepreneurial activities and some have established their own NGOs, a few have become minority government representatives (Interview Baracsi, 28th May 2011). Ms. Baracsi further stressed that after 4 years she can say that the program was successful for the Roma women who participated in the Women’s Centre program.

As we have seen in chapter 3 a focus on labor market integration alone as an avenue for employment is particularly problematic and discriminatory towards Roma women. Roma women’s engagement in unpaid domestic work and caring responsibilities restricts their entry into formal means of employment. Additionally, due to low level of education, Roma women end up doing informal jobs. The Women’s Centre Program supports Roma women to establish their own small scale enterprises on which women have collective ownership. Some women were trained to establish their own NGOs which again is a social entrepreneurial work. It is important to note that even though the HEFOP which aimed at supporting women’s entry into

³⁹ Hungary has prepared a National Development Plan which sets framework for the utilization of EU Structural Funds assistance. The European Commission has prepared the Community Support Framework containing the strategy and priorities. The strategy is implemented through the operational program. The Human Resources Operational Programme is one of the five operational programs of Hungary. It includes the interventions targeted at the fields of employment, education and training, social services and the healthcare system

the labor market and funded the Women's Centre Program based on this vision, the Women's Centre supported Roma women's economical, social and political entrepreneurship.

The other program of the Association is the 'Health Access Program'. Since 2008, the Association became partners with OSI Roma Initiative 'equal chances against cancer'. The role of the association primarily is to mediate between the Roma Initiative and local community actors from the villages who further organize the Health Day.⁴⁰

The association has started a training and personal development program called 'My Dreams' for the Roma women in Pecs since November, 2010. The program is part of the Roma Initiative's 'Roma Women's Empowerment Grant'. This program involves 25 Roma women who play leadership roles in their communities, some of them are part of the minority local self government, some of them are volunteering as leaders in the community work and some of them are recognized as leaders by the community. These Roma women are very active however being from the remote areas and due to lack of education they do not have access to resources, information and opportunities to do their work effectively. Thus, the association focused on capacity development of these women through trainings on leadership competence, team building, labor market training, minority rights training, and training on how to establish an NGO. Women are trained to write applications and develop projects. Baracsi emphasized that during the evaluation of the 'My Dream' program which took place in the third week of May 2011, Roma women expressed that not knowing English limited their opportunity and this was a big problem, as they have to write proposals for international grants in English (Interview Baracsi, 28th May 2011).

⁴⁰ See the Equal Chances Against Cancer Program of Roma Initiative

According to Ms. Baracsi the trainings are innovative and involve women's opinions and expectations before starting the training. The Roma women from the women's center who have been in close contact with the association serve as mentors, they play roles of leading the group during trainings. These mentors who are also community leaders approach women's families and husbands to make them understand what the program is about. Husbands are encouraged to come and see what their wives participate in (Interview Baracsi, 28th May 2011). This way the association involves the household and community in the process of capacity development and gender awareness.

According to Ms. Baracsi among other important things, the most important issue is the ongoing support for Roma women given by the association (Interview Baracsi, 28th May 2011). Roma women during the evaluation of the 'My Dream' program emphasized that they have learned a lot through the trainings and the interaction with the group. Women expressed that they saw a different world through these trainings. Women played a very different role than their roles as mothers and daughters in the households, during the training, the role of mentor, and the different roles while doing role plays were educational. During the interview Ms. Baracsi described the strong impact of the network women have built amongst themselves, with their community and with the association (ibid).

When asked what these trainings would lead to, Ms. Baracsi told that the Roma women involved have developed their leadership competencies through the trainings and this will help them in planning and implementing programs for their communities. Some of these women are part of the minority governments, a position they can use to help their community very efficiently as they have access to information and their rights through these trainings (Interview Baracsi 28th May 2011).

While answering Ms. Barasci emphasized that the Minority Rights Law (1993) in Hungary gives socio-cultural and educational rights to Roma but to materialize these rights there is no financial support and therefore the trainings aimed at proposal writing would help them to apply for grant. These women have developed network with other Roma women grassroots leaders, they have community trust and they are connected with the association. This will help them in building work with community resources (Interview Baracsi 28th May 2011). Ms. Baracsi also emphasized that during the meetings women shared innovative plans and programs and they advised each other about what work they can do in their respective communities (ibid). This shows that they have developed capacities to help themselves. This capacity building is crucial as Roma women are gradually building strong networks on community levels to collectively demand for their rights and inclusion.

The association networks with Roma Initiative for implementing the Mother's Center program too. From the association two Roma women are getting training to start a Mother's Center. Every year since year 2008 the association organizes a cultural festival. This festival is supported by OSI's Roma Culture Program. This year the theme of the festival is Roma women.

When asked whether under the Decade, local governments approach the association for implementing gender-aware programs related to Decade priorities, Ms. Barasci said that they have heard about international calls for proposal under the Decade but do not know about the national Decade program (interview Barasci, 27th May, 2011). She further argued that local level organizations are not adequately informed and involved in the national level programs. The established NGOs are often approached by the programs such as Decade. At the grassroots level there is greater need for networking and resource development but the community based organizations do not have information and access to such programs (ibid). She emphasized that

their association's role therefore is to mediate between the larger international level organizations like OSI Roma Initiative and the local women leaders through health access program, Mother's Centers and cultural festival.

When asked whether the association works directly on gender integration in any of the Decade priority areas, like education, employment, health, housing, Ms. Barasci stressed that, under the Women's Center program they focus on skill development and capacitating women. Women were trained to take up entrepreneurial activities to Roma women. The 'equal chances against cancer' specifically focuses on the health care needs of Roma and ensures their access to health care. Further the association has a strong contact with municipality through which they can help women to be part of the programs implemented at local level (interview Barasci, 27th May, 2011).

Besides being partners with Roma Initiative's equal chances against cancer program and the Mother's Centre, the association is part of ROMNIA International Roma Women's Group founded on 6th April, 2011⁴¹, and the Hungarian Women's Lobby. Ms. Barasci stresses that this networking is really helpful to gain information about various activities and opportunities. From the association the information is shared with women at community level (interview Barasci, 27th May, 2011).

⁴¹ Roma women Activists from various European Countries came to participate in the European Roma women's conference 'Roma women in focus', organized by the Hungarian Women's Lobby and the European Women's Lobby in Budapest on 7th April 2011. On 6th of April, 2011, a day before conference some of these European Roma women started a group called ROMNIA, in the interview Ms. Nicoleta Bitu told that "this even though is a small initiative, this will be lead by us women, we wanted to start something over which we wanted to have our ownership, earlier we worked on projects and once the project ended, the activities started by us stopped, we do not want this to happen again" (interview Bitu, 8th April 2011)

‘The Colored pearls’ Association is a good example of women’s activism at various levels. The association establishes networking with national and international organizations and connects local organizations with resources.

4.3 Mesed: Meselő Edesanyak (Storytelling Mothers)

‘Mesed’ the Storytelling Mothers is a program initiated by Ms. Furugh Switzer, a sociologist by profession. Ms. Switzer came to Hungary with her family in 1994 to help the Bahai (universal religion) community in Hungary with “the principle of helping the oppressed and minorities.

Storytelling mother program in Hungary initially began with the focus on developing mother’s abilities to creatively teach and assist their children in learning. Ms. Switzer began by visiting Roma settlements. In the beginning it was difficult to involve Roma women in the activities of the Center Ms. Switzer had formed. Ms. Switzer states that it was a challenge for her to involve Roma women who were mistrusting her as an outsider and also due to the apathy they have developed because of the hostility of majority society. Eventually, visiting each house and spending time with Roma women and their families helped in gaining the trust of the family and the Roma women. Ms. Switzer developed the center in the community by involving local government. Roma women started to come every week for two hours. It was important to create a positive and secured atmosphere that encouraged mothers to raise issues and concerns. The Center has now become avenue for Roma women to develop their reading, writing skills as well as build confidence. The mothers coming to the Center received and practiced with story books and they would reread these stories to their children. Ms. Switzer told that since mothers take the books home, sometimes children push their mothers to go to the center as they enjoy stories (Ibid)

At present the project is supported by the Roma Education Fund, ‘A Good Start’ program on early childhood development. The Roma Education Fund (REF) was created in the framework of the Decade of Roma Inclusion in 2005 in Budapest. The RFF identified Mesed as an important preschool initiative for Roma children as well as potential capacity building resource for Roma mothers. Mesed serves as a good example of networking of international and local organizations.

It is a long term project (two years) and therefore new phases are introduced to the initial only story reading sessions. First phase is reading stories, in the second phase a new element of writing is introduced and in the third phase women will learn theatre where they will enact situations of their daily lives. The importance of third phase is women will be trained to appear in interview and to interact with government authorities. These activities also help in reducing stress. “Studies show disadvantaged communities have higher level of stress, and Roma women are more vulnerable as they bear more familial responsibility, the stress release of Roma mothers is already an important step” (interview Switzer 27th May 2011). Ms. Switzer stressed that these activities are important for women to gain self confidence as they can read and at the same time they prepare their children for school (ibid).

When asked about co-operation from the local municipalities, Ms. Switzer mentioned that since the project got recognition and support from Roma Education Fund, local government support Roma women to establish a Center in the community by providing rooms to conduct sessions every week (interview Switzer 27th May 2011).

The project is expanded and there are 13 centers where 180 Roma mothers are getting trained. When asked about what future plans does she envision for the Roma mothers who have built

expertise and confidence Ms. Switzer stressed that her first objective was to help Roma women to read and make them feel confident, but now that the project is expanded, she thinks of some concrete steps such as employment opportunities for these women. She wishes to explore opportunities of part time employment for women in the school as school assistants (interview Switzer 27th May 2011).

4.4 Szirom: Szikszói Roma Nők Egyesülete (Association of Roma Women of Szikszó)

SZIROM is an association initiated to help the Roma people from Szikszó. Szikszó is a small town in the north east of Hungary with about 6000 inhabitants' 30% of whom are Roma. In the year 2010 there was a flood in this part of Hungary and a lot of houses were destroyed, the most affected were the Roma (Presentation Galantai 26th May 2011). The founder of the SZIROM Ildiko Farkos, a Roma woman herself, first started to generate funds to help the flood stricken Roma communities. She generated 5 million HUF from individual donors. The SZIROM was formed against this background in the year 2010, Ms. Angela Kocze, a Roma scholar and Roma women's rights activist, helped formalizing and organizing the Association (presentation Galantai 26th May 2011).

The association got support from the EU structural funds with the help of Project Generating Facility (PGF) of the Making the Most of EU Funds for Roma (MtM), an OSI initiative⁴² (Interview Zentai 23rd May 2011). In the interview Prof. Zentai portrayed SZIROM as an example of best practice for gender inclusion. Under the PGF training and capacity building

⁴² Making the Most of EU Funds for Roma (MtM) is a OSI initiative, through which OSI intends to maximize the use of available resources and funds by governments in the region and to help major European Structural and other European Funds "flow" to local governments, civil society, and private sector actors, who have the expertise needed to contribute the social inclusion of the Roma in all aspects of civic life (Local Government and Public Service Reform Initiative), The Project Generation Facility helps in training and capacity development of Local Roma organizations and assists them in apply for structural funding (Interview Zentai 23rd May 2011).

program in Szikszó, Roma women were employed as the ‘school assistants’, this was temporary paid job (ibid). Prof. Zentai further emphasized that the presence of these women made a drastic difference in the interaction of the school teachers with Roma children. There are two important policy lessons to be learnt from this instance is women help each other and it contributes to reduce the likelihood of discrimination in the education of Roma children (ibid).

In addition, two Roma women from SZIROM are currently getting trained with the help of Roma Initiative in Budapest to initiate a ‘Mother’s Center’ in their respective village or Roma community. SZIROM is relatively new but the future plan is to start a diaper factory to generate employment for Roma women with low education. In the beginning of May community workers from SZIROM conducted a social questionnaire to assess the community needs and specifically needs of Roma women who take care of the household. They plan to form future programs based on concrete needs of Roma women (presentation Galantai 26th May 2011).

4.5 Jai Bhim Network ‘Danmudra’ (Generous Gesture) Roma Women’s Self Help Group

Jai Bhim Network is a community program started in 2005. Ambedkar high school provides high school diploma training for Roma youth who have dropped out from school as well as adult education. JBN was started for the concerns of Roma community in the region from which the students of Ambedkar high school came. Mr. Derdak, emphasized that the Hungarian non-government education system in general is initiated by ‘wealthy parents’ where there is no space for Roma children. Therefore the Gandhi high school was formed to ensure right to quality education for Roma children. Mr. Derdak was approached by the ministry of education in 2005 in order to conduct a research for special educational needs of Roma youth and to the create Gandhi school model in other areas. Thus Ambekdar High school was formed in the northwest of

Hungary. Mr. Derdak said that “for us one of the objectives was that Roma girls get involved and that they do not drop out at young age, as for girls it’s a complete change of life. Once they have high school diploma they are motivated to go for higher education but if they drop out they end up in early marriage and child bearing and rearing role” (Interview Mr. Derdak 15th May 2011).

Mr. Derdak stressed that “Further we understood that it was not enough to only work with youth and education as the problems that lead them to drop out were within their community, the poverty and resourcelessness, therefore we decided to involve parents of the youth in the process with our community work” (Interview Mr. Derdak 15th May 2011). A women’s group was formed in the process as it was always mothers of the children, who came for the meetings. Since the year 2008 JBN regularly held meetings of two Roma women’s groups from Sajokaza village every Saturday and Sunday. Women were motivated to raise questions during the meetings. Some of the women joined adult literacy classes and some even joined Ambedkar high school. In the year 2009 women took computer skills course and started their choir singing group.

The ‘Danmudra’ (generous gesture) as a self help group was formed by women independent of JBN, woman members however approached JBN for advice on their community activities. Even though Danmudra is in its inception phase women’s groups are trained and encouraged to participate in local government and minority government. JBN envisions setting up training for the Danmudra self help group in order to create a microcredit model like the Grameen Bank⁴³.

To conclude this chapter I wish to highlight that the work of the organizations and projects discussed here have one thing in common: it is striking that all of them, as they focus on Roma women’s issues, work for a grassroots strengthening of the position and agency of Roma women

⁴³ Grameen Bank is a Microcredit initiative developed by Mohammad Yunus Noble winner in 2006 for developing the Grameen Bank model.

and for mobilizing women for this grassroots strengthening. Their vision, in other words, is to build pressure from the bottom.

It must also be added that most of the initiatives discussed in this chapter are very new, so they are still in the capacity building phase. However the Decade Action Plan in Hungary would be well advised to take these examples in to consideration in order to formulate concrete gender inclusive policies. In the chapter 5, I will conclude by outlining some policy recommendations emerging from the discussion of the gender aware programs and initiatives discussed in this chapter which could be helpful for developing and including gender awareness in the Decade Strategy Plan.

Chapter 5 Suggestions and Conclusion

In this final chapter I will conclude by summarizing some of my major findings and put forth recommendations based on the analysis of the core documents of Hungarian Roma politics and examples of Roma (women's) activism, and based on the suggestions of Roma women activists, academics, representatives of relevant governmental institutions, civil society actors and representatives of the Decade secretariat. In chapter 3 I have shown that measures for gender inclusion are missing in the Decade Strategic Plan and the NAP. The gender disparities affecting Roma women's access to education, employment, housing and health care are not identified in the Strategic Plan and NAP. Even though the Strategic Plan promises that gender equality will be effectuated through the implementation of tasks enlisted in the priority areas, the documents do not include concrete tasks specifically addressing Roma women's concerns.

Nevertheless from the examples of civil society activism we can see that the development of gender inclusive policy and action is possible and that successful initiatives do exist in the Roma civil society in Hungary. The policy lessons that can be taken from the examples could be used to make the NAP more gender inclusive. The examples of civil society activism affirm that developing Roma women's capacities at grassroots can lead to women's empowerment and their mobilization for advocating gender inclusive state agenda. The examples also show that the establishments of national and international network of Roma women's activists influence the policy at national and at EU level. With this background I will now put forward some suggestions for gender inclusive policy development of the NAP and conclude.

First of all the state should develop a gender inclusive mechanism for the NAP, with the involvement of international partners such as UNIFEM, Roma Initiative and gender experts and

Roma women activists. The government bodies responsible for inclusion and justice such as the State Secretariat for Social Inclusion and Ministry of Public Administration and Justice should put special emphasis on creating policies for Roma women. Qualitative researches should be conducted by the state to address the issues of Roma women. Along with studies and researches, gender and ethnicity disaggregated data should be produced and circulated so that policies would be formed with a gender perspective.

In the field of education we have seen that gender disparities affecting the education of Roma women are linked with customs and values of the community, poverty in the family, structural constraints and policy ineffectiveness. The suggestion here would be to create awareness programs at community level and national level to highlight educated, successful Roma women as role models. Nationwide scholarship programs should be developed specifically targeting Roma girls education. The Roma Education Fund is a good example here. Further school teachers should be given training to promote gender inclusive and multicultural education. Gender inclusive school curricula should be formulated with the help of experts on gender and intersectionality.

At the community level it would be important to encourage Roma mother's involvement in the educational activities such as school assistance in kindergarten as well as in the primary schools. Special trainings should be given to Roma women at the local level to develop their skills for school assistance. Here the example of Mesed (Storytelling mothers) is important. Projects such as Mesed should be promoted. Adult literacy programs that enhance community learning, as exemplified by the Mother's Center should be created.

In the field of work and employment it first has to be acknowledged that Roma women are mostly engaged in unpaid domestic work and caring responsibilities of the family. Roma women's household work should be recognized and positively valued and part time work opportunities taking into consideration interests and development of Roma should be encouraged and enhanced. Secondly the NAP that only supports women returning to labor market should be changed so as to offer support for all the Roma women who are willing to enter into the labor market. Roma women are largely engaged in the stigmatized work of caring and cleaning. In order to change this situations Skill development training and financial assistance should be given to community groups of Roma women to start entrepreneurial activity. Small scale enterprises should be promoted in the disadvantaged regions. The SZIROM project in Szikszó which plans to develop a factory is an example for this. Local Roma women community workers, minority government members and school assistants should be given a stipend to create a secure material basis for their work. There should be quota in both public and private sector for Roma women according to their population proportion.

In the field of housing, the state should pay attention to Roma women and specifically single Roma women in the housing related legislation. Roma women's access to adequate housing requires to define the meaning of adequate housing and should include also the rights to access to land, natural resources, livelihood and basic services, the right not to be evicted and a home equipped with facilities like water and electricity. Basic amenities like electricity, heating for the housing especially during the winter should be subsidized for Roma. Measures aimed at infrastructural development of the disadvantaged regions could reduce the regional disparity

which aggravates the vulnerability of Roma women in accessing education, employment and health care.

Roma women have lower life expectancies as compared to majority female populations, and higher rates of fertility, morbidity and mortality. The state should create time bound health and nutrition program for Roma women and specifically focusing at young Roma girls and Roma mothers. Health awareness programs focusing specifically at Roma women's health should be organised. Awareness programs for the use of contraception as well as sex education should be conducted in the communities. The Health days organized by the Roma Initiative under 'Equal Chances against Cancer' Program are a good example. The government hospitals and health practitioners should promote, participate and organize such health days. The health professionals should be trained to focus on gender dimensions along with multicultural dimension for strengthening gender sensitive, prejudice-free attitudes and anti-discriminatory practices.

In the end I want to reemphasize that in order to create gender inclusive policy scripts efforts from various levels and groups should be integrated. The examples of Roma activism shows that strengthening Roma women at the grassroots level is crucial as their mobilization will influence the policies to acknowledge Roma women's specificity. At the same time the networking and lobbying at national and international level should be developed and sustained to promote and protect the gender aware policies. Along with Roma women's network and advocacy there is a need of political will from the state. Decade initiative is a political commitment and such commitments should be made sustained for gender inclusive policy framing.

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Annex I Interview Guide

Profile of interviewee

- | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| - <i>Name:</i> | - <i>Educational qualification:</i> |
| - <i>Organisation:</i> | - <i>Position held</i> |
| - <i>Position held:</i> | - <i>Tenure:</i> |

- Please tell me the history and work of the organization/Roma women's initiative?
- Why was the organization/Roma women's initiative started?
- Since when do you work on the issues of Roma women?
- What issues related to Roma women do you deal with?
- Do you think the Decade initiative effectively integrates gender and specifically Roma women's issues in the National Action Plan?
- What do you think are the reasons for gender aware?
- Have there been government and civil society collaborations to deal with the priority areas of the Decade i.e. the Education, Employment, Health and Housing?
- Can you give me examples of the civil society initiatives that have gender aware programs, plans?
- What suggestions would you give to make the Decade Initiative Gender Inclusive?

Annex II Profile of the Interviewees

Sr. no	Name	Sex	Issues working on/ expertise and Organization affiliation	Date of Interview	Medium of interview
01	Ms. Agnes Osztylykan	F	Member of Parliament (Politics Can Be Different Party)	9th May 2011	In person
02	Ms. Rita Izsak:	F	Chief of staff for the Secretary of State responsible for social inclusion in the ministry of Justice and Public Administration in Hungary; she is also a National co-coordinator of the Decade.	4 th May 2011	In person
03	Ms. Ostalinda Maya	F	ERRC, Women's Rights Officer	28 th April 2011	In person
04	Ms. Angela Kocze	F	PhD Candidate of Sociology and Social Anthropology at Central European University, Budapest,	26 th April 2011	In person
05	Ms. Tunde Buzetzky	F	Facilitator, Decade of Roma Inclusion Secretariat Foundation	12 th May 2011	In person
06	Ms. Violeta Zentai	F	Making the Most of EU Funds for Roma Director Center for Policy Studies	22 nd May 2011	In person
07	Ms. Nicoleta Bitu	F	Romani CRISS	8 th April 2011	In person
08	Ms. Anita Czinkoczi	F	Roma Initiative (Women Grant program, Sr. Officer)	25 th May 2011	In person
09	Ms. Tatjana Peric	F	a human rights professional focusing on the situation of Roma and other ethnic minorities in Europe	8 th May 2011	Skype interview
11	Ms. Furugh Switzer	F	Mesed: Meslo Edesanyak Persian/Canadian sociologist, workshop leader, lecturer, director of the Unity in Diversity Foundation and life-skills educator. She has studied Inter-cultural, International Education at the University of Alberta in Canada and lives in Hungary for past 16 years	27 th May 2011	Skype interview

12	Ms. Kitti Barasci	F	Szines Gyongyok Delvideki (Coloured Pearl) Trainer, Proposal writer and Educationist, Ms. Barasci has studied communication science and she is pursuing doctoral studies in educational science.	28 th May 2011	Skype interview
13	Ms. Julia Galantai	F	Szirom: Szikszoi Roma Nok Egyesulete (Association of Roma Women of Szikszo)	26 th May 2011	In person
14	Mr. Derdak Tibor	M	Director Jai Bhim Network, Miskolc	15 th May 2011	In person
15	Ms. Maria Pantea	F	Researcher, conducted a study on Decade National Action Plan “Gender Mainstreaming in the National Action Plan” for UNIFEM	17 th May 2011	Skype interview