

# COVID-19 Response Action for Roma in Ukraine

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Members of Roma communities in Ukraine faced limited access to healthcare services, restricted access of education, stigmatization and undermined economic stability of every day earners. Poor housing conditions, overcrowdness and economic strandity - limited access to running water and sanitizers make it - make it complicated and nearly impossible to follow the quarantine rules of social distance and hygiene maintenance. When it comes to economic situation and job opportunities among Roma, based on the conducted study, it became evident that those Roma engaged in small entrepreneurship and those having seasonal work in neighboring countries got also negatively affected economically. Yet, the most economically affected have been the most marginalized Roma communities across the country, in particular in the reural areas with poor infostructure.

### **International Charitable Organization Roma Women's Fund 'Chiricli'**

International Charitable Organization Roma Women's Fund 'Chiricli', which means 'bird' in Romani, is a non-governmental Roma-led organization that assists vulnerable Roma and advocates for their inclusion in Ukrainian society.

Chiricli's activities include local, national, and international advocacy, human rights trainings for Roma communities and State authorities, monitoring and addressing the situation of Roma communities across Ukraine in their access to healthcare, education, housing, employment, public life and decision making through the network of Roma mediators and partnerships with local and central authorities. A specific focus is devoted to the situation of Roma women due to their particularly distinct situation in terms of the multiple discrimination that they face in public life on ethnic and gender grounds.

Roma Women's Fund 'Chiricli' is part of the Coalition of Roma NGOs 'Strategy 2020', and is a partner organization with the European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC Budapest), Council of Europe (CoE, Roma and Travellers team, Strasbourg), Office of UN Women in Ukraine, and last but not least, Minority Rights Group Europe.

### **Minority Rights Group Europe (MRGE)**

Minority Rights Group Europe (MRGE) is registered as a not for profit company under Hungarian Law. Based in Budapest since 1996, Minority Rights Group Europe is the European regional partner of Minority Rights Group International (MRGI), with the aim of promoting and protecting the rights of minorities and indigenous peoples across Europe and Central Asia. MRG Europe does this through capacity building, international advocacy, media advocacy and networking.

# Output report on COVID-19 Response Action for Roma in Ukraine (MRG)

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# 1. List of abbreviations

NGO	Non-governmental organization
IRF	International Renaissance Foundation
RVF	Roma Women Fund
UN	United Nations
Strategy	Post-2020 National Roma Strategy
COVID-19	Corona Virus Disease 2019

## 2. Executive summary

### 2.1. Brief description of the project



#### Background of the project

Chiricli has been collecting information on the effect of COVID-19 with regard to the health situation and social effects of the respective restricting quarantine measures on Roma minority communities across Ukraine starting from the middle of March 2020. It can be underlined, based on observations of our employees and Roma mediators, that, largely, marginalized Roma communities, due to their social isolation, had remained safe in terms of the spread of the virus. However, since the end of April 2020 the situation started to gradually deteriorate, as of 14 May 2020, an increase of confirmed cases of infection with COVID-19, in particular in Transcarpathia and Odesa regions. Yet, the most urgent need that became evident already on the second week of quarantine is financial means, food, and hygiene items. With the financial support of International Renaissance Foundation, UN Women Ukraine, and Alliance for Global health, Abilis foundation, RWF “Chiricli” has been reacting to these needs by providing food and hygiene items to Roma communities in Odesa, Kyiv, Chernihiv, Luhansk, and Transcarpatia regions. Some COVID-19 response measures planned by RWF Chiricli for 2021 will focus on equipping Roma from entrepreneurial sector with necessary skills of adapting to crisis situations such as the current lockdown.

#### Project objectives

- ✓ learn about the level of informing and the influence of quarantine measures on Roma communities in Ukraine;

- ✓ involve State bodies to protect social and economic rights of Roma communities in Ukraine; obtain data from Roma community members by involvement of newly prepared Roma mediators;
- ✓ prepare the monitoring report with recommendations for post-2020 National Roma Strategy (Strategy) timeframe;

#### Activities within the project

- ✓ Elaboration of a brief questionnaire and methodology of remote data collection;
- ✓ Data collection on the situation of Roma communities in 6 Regions (Odesa, Transcarpathia, Zaporizhzhya, Luhansk, Donetsk, Chernihiv);
- ✓ Production of a final monitoring report.

**Duration of the main monitoring activity within the project:** May - July 2020

#### Impact of the project

The activities carried out within this project rendered help in sectoral advocacy during the preparation phase of the post-2020 National Roma Strategy (the Strategy). Namely, this initiative contributed to the advancement of idea of inclusion a new section to the Strategy which is to relate to crisis and post-crisis situations. This particularly concerns the situation of those communities directly affected by the COVID-19 as well as those indirectly affected due to quarantine restricting measures. Focus to crisis and post-crisis situations in the Strategy is also necessitated by another hardship that Ukraine is facing for already 6 years – Roma internally displaced persons (IDPs), whose situation with regard to realization of basic rights persists to be aggravated by the complexity of accessing right to citizenship housing and education.

#### Data collecting

The utilization of data was carried remotely due to the risks of personal contacts and transmission of COVID-19. Most semi-structured interviews were done through phone calls. In case of some respondents, who had limited access either to mobile phones or the Internet, Roma mediators visited these families using the special protective uniform and adhering to safety measures.

## 2.2. Key findings



Based on the observations and collected information from Roma mediators, it was concluded from the semi-structured interviews that during the quarantine and pandemic outbreak as of March 2020, members of Roma communities in Ukraine faced limited access to healthcare services, restricted access of education, stigmatization and undermined economic stability of every day earners. In addition, the results of interviews also highlight the housing issues in Roma settlements, which are overcrowded and have limited access to running water and sanitizers; hence is complicated and nearly impossible to follow the quarantine rules of social distance and hygiene maintenance.

When it comes to economic situation and job opportunities among Roma, based on the conducted study, it became evident that those Roma engaged in small entrepreneurship and those having seasonal work in neighboring countries got also negatively affected economically. Yet, the most economically affected have been the most marginalized Roma communities in Transcarpathia, Chernihiv, Kyiv, and Donetsk regions.

## 2.3. Key recommendations and conclusions

Relying on the data provided by the Roma mediators from 6 regions of Ukraine, the implementing team of the project came to the main conclusions and recommendations that will be described in details in farther chapters of the report. Yet, preliminary it is clear that the situation of the ensuring of the basic rights among Roma was worsened during the quarantine, some respondents admitted limitation of their right to health and education. In addition, the economical and the main income sources were shortened to representatives of Roma communities and in some extreme cases they had to depend only on humanitarian aid. The main recommendations, which were gathered and concluded by the Chiricli are listed below:

- ✓ Include needs of members of Roma communities in the process of drafting of the national and regional plans of economic resumption
- ✓ Ensure access to medical service for Roma women, men and children despite the lack of birth certificates, IDs and contracts with general physician. Use positive action of the State to not discriminate Roma and prevent discrimination based on ethnicity in healthcare facilities;
- ✓ Distribute information on prevention of respiratory disease transmission, safety measures and quarantine restrictions in accessible formats and languages, including in Romani language;
- ✓ Provide access to education for Roma children in remote format taking into consideration limited access to the Internet and other communicative technologies;
- ✓ Ensure access to the running water and sanitation, food, electricity and other basic human need for Roma, including those living in segregated Roma settlements, namely by solving the issue of legalization of Roma compact settlements;
- ✓ Publicly condemn any cases of hate speech towards Roma, violence or other forms of stigmatizations and discrimination despite the source of their origin;
- ✓ Effectively counteract to any practice of social isolation, anti-Roma attacks and effectively investigate hate crimes against Roma.

# 3. Theoretical framework

## 3.1. Methodology

The implementing team of the project was involved into the process of developing of questionnaires for semi-structured interviews in Roma communities. From the designed semi-structured interviews and Roma mediators testimonies, qualitative and quantitative data arrives. As it was already mentioned, in 6 regions of Ukraine, namely in Zaporizhia, Chernihiv, Zakarpattia, Odessa, Luhansk and Donetsk. Overall, 9 Roma mediators were collecting information remotely and in exceptional cases they attended families that could not provide information by mobile phone. It is important to mention, that no any personal data were stored and collected during evaluation. Each mediator conducted 50 interviews with the members of local

Roma communities and used a specially designed google form for faster recording of information. In addition, some Roma mediators made testimonies on the situations that they observed while interviewing community members and experiencing quarantine measures on they own. Therefore, in the next sub chapters, the main information gathered from semi-structured interviews will be illustrated in the light of the main inquires of questionnaires. Moreover, testimonies of Roma mediators, namely Angelika Bielova, Viktor Chovka, Dmitry Prodan and Nonna Zolotareva will be used for the full covering of the process of collecting of data in Roma communities across Ukraine.

## 3.2. Semi-structured qualitative interviews performed by Roma mediators

As it was mentioned before, Roma mediators conducted 50 semi-structured interviews each. The questionnaire was designed for obtaining as much information as needed and each respondent from Roma community had to reply to 19 questions. Therefore, the main conclusions on the influence of COVID-19 to Roma communities in Ukraine based on opinions of Roma community members, where Roma mediators played role of the main interviewers. In this chapter the main questions of inquires will be illustrated.

**1. Who and how was informing Roma citizens about the peculiarities of quarantine and self-isolation? What role did: 1. social services 2. medical institutions 3. family doctors 4. public organizations 5. local self-government bodies 6. Roma activists / mediators play this role in informing?**

In many cases, respondents of the survey mentioned that the most common sources of information that they received was obtained from the Internet sources, family doctors, NGOs and Roma mediators, that informed members of Roma communities by their

mobiles. It is important to mention, that Roma NGOs played important role in informing of Roma and some respondents mentioned NGO “Lacho drom” in Zaporizhian and NGO “Zor” in Chernihiv region. When it comes to the social services and other state actors, from their side there was no any coherent informing of Roma. In addition, even when informational materials were distributed or broadcasted, the language of informing was not adaptive to Roma community members. Therefore, communities located in Zakarpattia region were not informed in the language of their communication, thus had problems of understanding of quarantine restrictions and measures for self-isolation. The other issue also derived for Roma inhabitants, that did not have access to the Internet and television.

**2. Perhaps you are aware of the self-initiatives of representatives of Roma communities in informing Roma citizens about the peculiarities of quarantine, self-isolation?**

The role of the Roma activist, mediators and Roma NGOs and Roma mediators become crucial in

informing Roma communities. Many respondents admitted, that in case of emergency they communicated with Roma mediators and representatives of Roma NGOs. Therefore, in Lugansk region, namely in Kreminna, NGO “Bahtalo drom” worked in synergy with social services and was doing informing of Roma communities through mobile phones. Overall, this organization contacted 200 Roma community members, necessity of self-isolation and first actions in case of the main symptoms of the virus. Furthermore, organizations like NGO “Zor” and NGO “Bahtalo drom” were distributing humanitarian aid in a way of food packages and hygiene kits. That activities were supported by the IRF and were highly appreciated in Roma communities since that gave contribution to those, who because of quarantine could not continue to provide to their families.

**3. Was Roma citizens’ access to personal protection and hygiene properly organized? In this matter, please highlight the following: 1. Ability for Roma citizens to acquire personal protective equipment 2. Provision by local authorities 3. Provision by humanitarian, charitable and non-governmental organizations 4. Disinfection of living quarters and common areas in compact settlements. Who and how was such access organized?**

Most respondents claim, that they received personal protective equipment, in other words masks, gloves and hand sanitizers from Roma NGOs. They mentioned, that they did not observe any state contribution to providing any supplies not only to Roma, but also to non-Roma. They also said, that in the very beginning of quarantine were cases when it was completely impossible to buy personal protection equipment and hygiene supplies because they were simply absent in pharmacies. Even, when they again were coming into stock, the price was not affordable and in time of economical crisis it was impossible to provide these utilities to all family members.

Many respondents admitted an important role of NGOs in this matter. For example, in Odessa region RWF “Chiricli” in cooperation with the Alliance of Public health distributed personal protective equipment to Odessa and Zakarpattia regions. Moreover, with financial support of the International Renaissance Foundation, several Roma communities were provided with food packs. In case of disinfection, local authorities and the Ministry health of Ukraine were claiming about the importance of organizing disinfection in public places and premises. However, Roma community members were complaining that especially at segregated areas public servants did not

do any disinfection and even ignored that kind of requests.

**4. Were there any examples of displacement of Roma citizens during the declared quarantine? Namely: 1. Forced relocations 2. Return from abroad 3. Moving between regions 4. Relocation at points of demarcation with temporarily occupied regions**

The respondents claimed, that they did not have any information of any kind of displacement of Roma. One respondent from Uzhhorod mentioned, that during last five years he is commuting between Uzhhorod and Brody in Lviv region for collecting metal. During quarantine he has not experience any relocation and moved freely between regions. Fourteen respondents from Uzhhorod told, that they have been obliged to come back from abroad because of quarantine. They also mentioned that they had to quite their job there and mostly mentioned Slovakia, Hungary, Germany, Check republic and UK as a destination of their temporary employment. One respondent also mentioned, that one their relative that came back from Check republic transmitted the virus to him.

Chiricli also notes an incident of use of hate speech and forced relocation of Roma by a politician: on April 22, 2020, the mayor of Ivano-Frankivsk Ruslan Martsinkiv gave an illegal order to deport the people of the Roma nationality out from the city borders. This was announced at the weekly operational meeting and via media. In his statement, he repeatedly used hate speech stirring up ethnic hatred against Roma in Ivano-Frankivsk and beyond, as this was actively debated in the media and social media platforms that collected massive anti-Roma commentaries under the publications.

**5. Were quarantine measures and self-isolation organized in Roma communities and families (if so, how exactly, and if not, why)? Namely: 1. Organization of observation of Roma workers arriving from abroad 2. Self-isolation in Roma settlements 3. Self-isolation in families with inadequate living conditions, large families 4. Self-isolation of citizens returning from abroad.**

When it comes to the self-isolation organized in Roma communities, most respondents shared their views on whether self-isolation was organized and in what extent this obligations were carried in Roma communities. It should be noted, that 86% of respondents claimed that self-isolation in Roma communities have not been organized in any specific manner. However, most of the respondents mentioned that they followed self-isolation and were staying at home during quarantine. The issue of

overcrowded homes was brought up several times. For instance, one respondent from Zakarpattia region mentioned, that "Since my family is big, my relatives that was diagnosed with COVID-19 had to rent another apartment for self-isolation. They were staying there one month till the full recovering, my some other relatives were hospitalized. " Another responded from Roma settlement shared "many Roma complained about unfeasible self-isolation requirements, because Roma live close to each other without following building norms".

Roma workers arriving from abroad spoke about the observation at Ukrainian territory, when in the Ukrainian border, they had to sign respective papers that obliged them to keep observation and his body temperature was measured. Seventeen Roma workers told that law enforcement officers were checking only ones my phone calls whether they stay home for observation. In contrast, other Roma community members, 22 respondents observed that no one was checking workers that arrived from abroad and claimed that some workers did not stay at home and police did not regulate them at all. As one respondent said, "my neighbor came from Slovakia and police came to check her only ones, I was staying home 2 days until I received negative NHS test ".

#### **6. How quarantine measures were carried out in temporary Roma settlements: 1. who organized them and how? 2. who exercised control?**

There was no any respondent in this study, that live in temporary Roma settlements for this reason they could not share any information by themselves. The only information that the respondent have is based on information, transferred from other people. Some Roma community members said that there is no chance for people in temporary settlements to carry quarantine measures. The only control that was organized in temporary settlements was done by the non-formal leaders, deputies, Roma activists, Roma NGOs and Roma mediators.

#### **7. Were there any conflicts within communities due to violations of quarantine measures?**

Some minor conflict occurred in Roma settlements between younger generation and older. Youngsters were mostly criticized by older generation because of ignorance of quarantine. For example in Nizhyn, one respondent stated that "during quarantine my husband's parents all the time was trying to break quarantine, they were putting in danger my family by this negligence and we were all time had conflicts on this basis". Moreover, in Zaporizhia how one respondent said "one Roma family decided to organize a birthday party for their child and a lot of

Roma were invited to this event. Only when people from older generation asked to follow quarantine and postpone this party for the better time, this event did not happen". Some conflicts were coming out when some Roma that recently from abroad have not been invited to celebrations even after observation.

#### **8. Ensuring the access to paid work**

Most respondents shared the information, which they mostly employed non-officially. Only 10 % of respondents were employed officially and during quarantine had chance to continue working remotely. Before the quarantine most Roma women were working at street markets or re-selling walnuts. Roma community members, who were running private entrepreneurship, were complaining on the lack of savings and obligation to pay taxes after quarantine. In addition, Roma, which were employed in selling goods, mentioned that because of the lack of finances of their customers, it is very difficult to sell goods. For example, one respondent from Mukachevo complained, that "I am selling my own painting pictures. No one buys them now, people do not have money..."

#### **9. Access to medical services: 1. access to medical services in connection with COVID-19 2. access to medical services in connection with current, chronic diseases, emergencies**

60% of Roma community members that took part in survey claimed that had access to medical services. Some respondents mention Roma mediator Nonna Zolotareva, who helped Roma in Nizhyn with official contracts with family doctors. Some respondents from Zakarpattia region stated about very limited access to medical services and shared their observations on medical negligence. Citations from interviews could be read below

- "Everything is going very bad ... in the medical institution, where I have been hospitalized the facilities are very bad. Only using my social contacts I was transferred to another hospital in Uzhorod"- a respondent from Shahta district in Uzhorod
- «An ambulance did not come to use, because they new that my son was sick on coronavirus. I felt very bad, after some hours ambulance finally came»
- "An access is very limited. It is very difficult to conduct a NHS test. Medical stuff do not do immediately NHS test for people with obvious COVID-19 symptoms "
- "It was a very restricted access to public medical instructions. A lot of things now connected to the professional performance of family doctors.

I am 65 years old and was sick on COVID-19. All medical check ups I was doing in a private hospital"

Thus, medical negligence and restricted access to medical care in this survey has more regional nature. In other words, most respondents from Zakarpatia region were complaining about inadequate medical assistance and reluctance responses on emergency cases.

**10. Access to education: 1. How many students dropped out and returned home? Did they have access to distance education? 2. How many school-age children have been transferred to distance learning? (It is desirable to give this information by breakdown: primary school, middle and high school) 3. How was distance learning organized for students? How many children had / did not have technical means for distance learning? 4. What other forms of education was provided and who offered? 5. Who controlled children's access to education?**

A number of respondents shared their negative impression with distance learning. In many cases, Roma children faced with additional barriers in

obtaining mostly primary and secondary education. Their parents told, that they could not provide to their children with necessary technical equipment and access to the Internet. In Chernihiv region, a Roma woman stated that she "has a son that studies at high school, except old mobile phone they did not have any technical equipment. One a week she was connecting with teacher, who was giving assignments for the whole week. That the only method of education that her son experienced". Other women from Zaporizhia said, that "I am raising two children by myself, during quarantine my children did not study because I do not have money to buy them neither laptops, nor smart phones". From the responses of conducted interviews, 73% responded did not appreciate remote education and pointed out lack of technical equipment, 8 % of respondents said that their children, who mostly enrolled in higher education did not have any problems with their studies and the respondents (19%) did not have any information on this topic. No other forms of education were developed so far and the main control on academic performance was done by children's parents and mostly by mothers.

### 3.3. Testimonies of Roma mediators

During conducting interviews with members of Roma community, several mediators eye-witnessed situations, that shed the light on the processes inside Roma communities during quarantine measures and it's interrelation with medical care system in Ukraine. For this reason, in their cases they raise stigmatization, unequal treatment, lack of information, hate speech, negligence, bureaucracy and vague response to transmission of corona virus infection disease.

✓ **Angelika Bielova, a Roma mediator from Zaporizhia on stigmatization in Roma community:** "In one family, a 50 years old man got sick from COVID-19. His family owns horses and this man was provided to his family by entertaining children in local parks. He became terribly sick and after some time passed away from disease. The virus did not transmit to his family members; however Roma community members started to ignore and stigmatize this family. There was no confidentiality in the hospital and now all family members of the dead man staying at home,

*because they are afraid of damnation from neighbors."*

✓ **Nonna Zolotariova, a Roma mediator on hate speech towards Roma in Konotop:**

"A major of Konotop, namely Artem Semeniuk, in the live stream broadcasted in Facebook reported on the situation of COVID-19 spread in the city. In his statement, he mentioned one person that became sick, he stated that among others there is "a woman, who is vulgarly known as gypsy women, that came back from France""

✓ **Dmitry Prodan, a Roma mediator from Odessa:** "In Nerubaiske, which located in Odessa region, the outbreak of coronavirus happened. Local Roma community members, that became sick, did not follow quarantine restrictions and personal protection. Doctors did not have any interest in the health conditions of these people. There is no any information on concrete numbers of how many infected people and how they feel."

✓ **Viktor Chovka, Roma mediator and journalist from Uzhorod describes situation on medical negligence and unpleasant facilities in medical institution:**

*"There are several Roma families in Uzhorod, which became sick from COVID-19. All these cases were proved by the NHS test, all families live in Radvanka district, Shahta and on other locations in Uzhorod. Older people, who 45-60 years old, placed in hospitals and their relatives staying at home on self-isolation. There is also information on Roma, sick in COVID-19 in Vynohradiv and Pidvinohradiv. Two cases with the fatal outcome from coronavirus were registered in these areas. In Perechin, and in villages near to Perechin, where a number of Roma live, was recorded one death from coronavirus. Coming back to Uzhhorod, two deaths from COVID-19 among Roma have been officially recorded. The third death occurred after discharge from the COVID-19 corps, the man died from complications.*



*Unfortunately, I witnessed these tragic events, so I can share information with you in details. The first infection happened with a woman who had concomitant hepatitis C. She immediately went to the doctor (who treated Hepatitis C) after feeling unwell. Treatment recommendations were provided. The woman's condition deteriorated and she decided to go to the city hospital BAM, because she did not have a family doctor. She was examined, given recommendations and sent home. A day later, the woman again went to the medical check of the city hospital. She was diagnosed with pneumonia. This became a suspicion of COVID-19. The hospital did two rapid tests, where one turned out to be positive and the other negative. Therefore, it was decided to do a NHS test, that took 4 days. The woman was already in serious condition. And on the same day she was examined by infectious disease doctors. During the examination, her breathing deteriorated as she was forced to walk up the stairs. At the same time, a positive NHS test came. The woman was taken to hospital. It was Friday and on Saturday, she was prescribed hydroxychloroquine (an injection from COVID-19, which is currently being canceled). After that she became ill, she was connected to the ventilator and on Monday she died. I noticed for myself that no one found any contact persons. Neither the doctors nor the police were interested in the further transmission of this disease. After that case, 17 people were hospitalized with COVID-19 symptoms. I could add, that even after these number of sick people, no one again was interested in who was in contact with whom. I also would like to mention, that family doctors are not «eager» to send for NHS tests, maybe because it is a complicated bureaucratic procedure. Furthermore, most Roma patients with COVID-19 end up in the Uzhhorod City Hospital (BAM), with very uncomfortable facilities. Roma patients were complaining on the lack of heating, unsanitary conditions and no running water for taking shower."*

# 4. Conclusions and recommendations

## 4.1. Conclusions

The information, gathered during this evaluation describes vulnerability of Roma during pandemic and introduced COVID-related restrictions. Roma community members in Ukraine shared their experiences during lock down in the area of access to medical and social services, education, housing and economic status. During this study, the Roma mediators managed to build an evitable trust, that made respondent to reply openly and without any objections about interrelation of quarantine with different social domains.

From the activities imposed by the state, it is important to mention that local states authorities did not take into consideration and did not do any prognosis on how the COVID-19 restrictions affect Roma community wellbeing. When restrictions were designed, state authorities did not include the main sources of financial support, did not understand that mainly Roma rely on every-day earnings, high level of illiteracy among adults and poor living conditions. All this factors made Roma communities in Ukraine suffer from lack of finances and absence of savings, impractical personal protection rules and almost unachievable social distancing.

The lack of medical assistance and open ignorance of medical stuff and ambulance service is another crucial thing that form limited access to medical services for Roma in Ukraine. As respondents stated it several times, the lack of personal documents and birth certificates create a barrier for signing a contract with family doctors. In case of the obvious symptoms of COVID-19, where family doctors become first contact for further proceedings and medical checks, most Roma families fail to establish even this contact. There are also facts, when ambulances did not come to Roma settlements or Roma community members had to wait for medical assistance for hours that also proves negligence and limitation of access to medical care.

After the quarantine measures were imposed by the state, for the first time the housing of Roma was questioned and came to the open discussion. Of



cause, in the overcrowded homes without running water in Roma settlement Roma inhabitants less likely could follow preventive measures for COVID-19 transmission. Moreover, personal protection rules were barely carries because of the lack of financial means for buying face masks, sanitizers and other utilities. The informing about cleaning tips and hygiene was mostly done through Roma mediators in Roma settlements.

When it comes to access to education, the durable remote education have negative effect not only to those who pursue studies, but also to family members. Due to the limited access to the Internet and lack, technical equipment made Roma children unprepared for this type of studies. Most respondents, that have children stated that because of the financial needs and absence of income, they could not provide to their children laptops or smart phones for joining online classes. Even in case of having reliable Internet connection and technical equipment, parents had to assist and control their children to perform in classes. In this respect, additional obligations were taken by Roma mothers even despite high level of illiteracy among them and number of children with different age for whom educational environment had to be organized simultaneously.

## 4.2 Recommendations

To prevent the negative social consequences of the pandemic, we propose to take into account and be guided by the following:

- At the national and regional levels, take into account the needs of the Roma when developing plans for economic recovery and social protection;
- Ensure that Roma women, men, and children have access to all health services without exception, regardless of their identity documents, birth certificates, and declarations made or not concluded with family doctors, and eliminate discriminatory practices promptly;
- Many children do not have adequate conditions for homeschooling and parents cannot provide for them due to their difficult financial situation, so the state must offer alternative learning conditions for children regardless of their financial situation;
- Disseminate all pandemic information, quarantine measures, and instructions on COVID-19 prevention measures in Roma-accessible languages and an accessible form;
- Ensure access of Roma children to education, remotely or by other alternative and accessible methods, taking into account the existing restrictions on access to communication technologies;
- Many children cannot count on parental support due to the low level of literacy and education of many adult Roma, so the State should put efforts on teachers
- Provide access to water, food, electricity and the urgent humanitarian needs of Roma and communities deprived of it, including informal settlements;
- Publicly condemn all cases of hate speech, violence, and aggressive remarks against Roma, regardless of their source of origin;
- Effectively counteract the practices of social isolation, harassment, and unjustified isolation of Roma, ensure effective investigation of all hate crimes committed against Roma;
- Educational institutions, the education management system were completely unprepared and unable to offer any alternative forms of education for Roma children, so in the future alternative education programs should be organized