

Final Evaluation Report

Roma Equality through Increased Legal Access (REILA)

**"The community's awareness of discrimination and protection mechanisms
was strengthened"**

Hungary, Serbia

November 2022

Report of an Evaluation Team comprising:

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Photo: Mediator working with Project participants in Stara Pazova, Serbia, 2022.

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

CPE	Commissioner for Protection of Equality
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DGET	Directorate-General of Equal Treatment
EC	European Commission
ERRC	European Roma Rights Centre
EU	European Union
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GIZ	German Agency for International Cooperation
KII	Key Informant Interview
KIs	Key Informants
MRGE	Minority Rights Group Europe
NHRI	National Human Rights Institution
OECD/DAC	The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
OSF	Open Society Foundations
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
REILA	Roma Equality through Increased Legal Access
RRA	Rapid Rural Appraisal
SCT	Social Cognitive Theory
ToC	Theory of Change
ToR	Terms of Reference
UPR	Universal Periodic Review

I. Executive Summary

Executive Summary highlights are:

- REILA positively complemented similar MRGE projects with the Roma in Europe.
- On 11 positive statements ('had Direct Impact' etc), the evaluation's quantitative ratings from participants ranged from 93% (MRGE as 'expert') to 83% ('sustainable') with an extremely positive average rating of **88.72%**. All results are [here](#).
- Strengths included: good context and gap analysis; evidence-based and 'evaluative learning' approaches integrated into project design and applied from the very beginning; strong baseline reports and comparative studies; value added by an empowerment approach to participants to tackle the root cause of discrimination.
- Improvement can be made on: the very short time period of work (10 months out of 24 months) with the primary beneficiaries; increases in the number and compensation for field workers, particularly mediators; greater publicity in some communities building on REILA success with media and social networking in others; intensified advocacy efforts with the EU; a continued move to an increase in face-to-face meetings in Brussels and community level (while online tools may still be used with lawyers and some CSOs).
- The evaluation finds that planned outputs were mostly met (and that unmet outputs were despite a satisfactory response to the COVID-19 challenge), and that REILA made significant, value-for-money impact towards its stated objectives.

Full executive summary:

The REILA project was funded by the European Union's Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme (2014-2020). Implementation of the project started on 1 September 2020 and ended on the 30 September 2022, after a 1 month no cost extension.

The aim of REILA was to promote and protect the rights of Roma victims of human rights violations and discrimination. It aimed to do this by: raising societal and stakeholder awareness; enhancing implementation of non-discrimination legislation; and empowering Roma to actively seek legal remedies and access to justice mechanisms, in Hungary and Serbia.

According to the ToR this final evaluation's objectives were to assess the OECD/DAC evaluation criteria of project relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability and impact against the objectives and supporting outputs. These are set out in 'Roma Equality through increased Access to Justice'. It also aims to provide MRGE with an opportunity for structured evaluative learning around programme design and implementation processes. The evaluation was focused on identifying lessons learned and good practice transferable to the similar projects MRGE is currently implementing in Slovakia, Slovenia, Croatia and Bulgaria.

The evaluation used a mixed methods approach combining qualitative and quantitative methods in order to enhance the validity of the results. Qualitative methods were largely used on primary data sources (interviews, focus groups). Quantitative methods were used in questionnaires and secondary data sources (monitoring and evaluation data, and the Project's progress reports). Questionnaires comprised 11 positive statements, all of which were highly rated/endorsed as follows: 'Had Direct Impact' at 83%; 'Rights of beneficiaries' at 86%; 'Met beneficiary needs and priorities' at 89%; 'Sustainable' 83%; MRGE as: 'open to feedback/criticism' at 91%; 'expert' at 93%; 'seeking equality' at 89%; 'accepting contrary views' at 91%; 'working on capacity gaps' at 90%; supporting women' at 90%; 'tackling participation barriers' at 91%. These extremely high results are comparable with the Evaluation Teams research for comparative work worldwide. For example participants in this study confirmed with 93% agreement that MRG is 'Expert'; in the evaluation team's recent [FoRB](#)¹ study, this was at 88.8% and in the team's [global evaluation of MRG's work worldwide](#)² with a comparatively high sample size, it was at 86.83% for trainees and 87.46% for partners. Similarly, this evaluation's 91% rating of MRG being 'open to criticism' compares with 93.6%, 84.25% and 91.25% respectively. That MRG "meets the needs of its beneficiaries" was at 89% here, compared with 73.8%, 75.58% and 82.45% respectively. Questionnaire respondents unanimously saw MRGE's role as 'strengthening co-ordination and co-operation' which evaluators regarded as positive identification of a key MRG role. The title quote - **"The community's awareness of discrimination and protection mechanisms was strengthened"** - came from an anonymous respondent, and was chosen because it summed up repeated support for two crucial project elements of awareness leading to protection as part of REILA's empowerment approach.

In the qualitative evaluation of impact, a theory-based approach was used to investigate the causal linkage that relates to inputs, activities, and outputs to impacts. Given project duration, measuring long-term impact posed a challenge for the evaluation. Long-term effects were separated into mid-term measurable goals underpinning progress markers (which will lead to the ultimate long-term goals). Several theoretical models and concepts - such as *outcome mapping*, *social cognitive theory*, and *several learning theories* - were used to underpin progress markers for change in knowledge, skills, attitudes, behavior and policies among the stakeholders.

Evaluators' general conclusion was that the Project activities built on and complemented similar projects and programmes implemented in the Region in the past few decades. The Project created added value through an empowerment approach towards beneficiaries, who improved their capacities to participate and contribute in defending their rights. They no longer depend exclusively on the good will, discretion and voluntarism of the state officials and local authorities. Moreover, empowering cooperation among the partners in the Project was transferred to the communities and primary beneficiaries. This influenced their perception, beliefs, motivation, skills and competencies so as to take greater control of their own lives and to also contribute to inclusive local development.

¹ 'Freedom of Religious Belief in South Asia'. July 2022. Hampson, Batay-an and Proux.

² MRG-SIDA Capacity Building Programme and MRG's Global Programme 2012-18. February 2020. Hampson, Batay-an and Ostojic.

Research efforts incorporated in the Project also strengthened focus on discrimination as a root cause of the plight of Roma people in Hungary and Serbia, a neglected truth in both countries.

Strengths also included: good context and gap analysis; evidence-based and ‘evaluative learning’ approaches integrated into project design and applied from the very beginning; and strong baseline reports and comparative studies.^{3 4 5}

Room for improvement was found in some aspects of the project design and implementation, including the very short time period of work (10 months out of 24 months) with the primary beneficiaries. While fully recognising the severe mitigating effects of COVID-19, the evaluators conclude the primacy of starting direct work with the beneficiaries as early as possible, even from the phase of context analysis and gap in needs identification. This might have, hypothetically, created a platform for later participation methods (e.g. PRA, RRC, PCD, or similar). Longer involvement and consistent participation of the beneficiaries would contribute to stronger consolidation of the positive results of the Project.

Another point requiring further investigation was reputedly low financial compensation rates for field workers. This was highlighted by several key informants and allies, particularly the mediators, many of whom are reputable Roma activists working for many years with vulnerable people. MRGE holds that the fee may seem low to mediators themselves, the rates were reached in consultation with partners and based on their suggestions while the project proposal was being prepared. In the Project they have an important role of finding cases, sharing information and educating beneficiaries. This is reflected on primary and secondary reach of the Project, thus on its effectiveness, impact and particularly efficiency. It is concluded that continuation of such a project would require significantly higher numbers (perhaps double) of mediators, as the key strength has been that of outreach. A similar point is made in the recommendations about fees for evaluation. Both areas might benefit from comparative studies and liaison with the donor on project resourcing.

Many KIs were of the opinion that the Project needed more publicity. In some communities (e.g. Ličika in Kragujevac. Serbia) significant results were achieved in terms of secondary reach and building up a base of Project supporters and allies through regular cooperation with media and use of social networks. This assured massive secondary reach, and creation of a wider pool of allies and supporters.. This could usefully be adapted and replicated in the use of social networks for the whole project.

Partners engaged in advocacy efforts on a local, national and EU level which included meetings with decision-makers, dissemination of accurate research data and proven practice, production and submitting of shadow reports. However, establishing cooperation with state stakeholders in poorly implemented systems would require intensifying advocacy efforts on the EU level; with the reduction in

³ Spítálszky, A. (2021) Roma in the Republic of Serbia and Hungary: The Challenges of Discrimination – A Comparative Report, Budapest

⁴ Király, K.J., Bernáth G., Setét, J. (2021) Roma in Hungary: The Challenges of Discrimination, Minority Rights Group Europe (MRGE), Budapest

⁵ Bašić, G. (2021) Roma in the Republic of Serbia: The Challenges of Discrimination, Minority Rights Group Europe (MRGE), Budapest

COVID-19 restrictions, it is advised that some of this again becomes face-to-face, to increase awareness and commitment to pursuing effective national level advocacy.

The evaluation finds that planned outputs were mostly met, eg. conferences, meetings, reports, legal aid - including before the national equality bodies - and shadow reports. Those unmet (e.g. number of activists trained) were a direct result of COVID-19 restrictions, but opportunities were taken to transform manuals into interactive e-learning and development of a highly interactive online platform. As there was low participation on the online course, partners organized a second round in spring-summer 2022. The total number of participants for the (1st and 2nd rounds of the online course were: 26 lawyers out of the initially planned 30 (87%); 25 CSO staff of a planned 30 (83%); 27 Roma activists out of a planned 30 (90%).

In summary, the evaluation finds against DAC criteria that REILA has proved an effective component of the wider MRGE tackling of anti-Roma discrimination in Europe, and provision of both legal solutions and effective encouragement of empowered populations.

II. Introduction

A. Evaluation purpose and target audience

The evaluation will be used to inform ongoing learning within MRGE, partners, and allies on the best ways to achieve shared objectives. It may also inform MRGE's methodological choices and intervention choices at the program level when designing new programmes and deciding on areas of focus and ways of working. The results may also be used by partners and allies when considering programming priorities and intervention modalities in the future.

The evaluation also has a summative purpose, and intended users and potential users include EC and other donors (future & existing).

B. Evaluation objective and scope

According to ToR (Annex III) the objectives of the final evaluation are:

Assess the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability, and impact of the project in relation to the objectives and supporting outputs set out in 'Roma Equality through increased Access to Justice' and to provide MRGE with an opportunity for 'structured evaluative learning, with the aim of learning from the programme design and implementation processes.

Based on the findings of the evaluation, develop a set of suggestions and key recommendations for future and continued MRGE and its partners' activities.

To report to the EU and other funders on the usage of their resources in the project. The evaluators have worked within the timeframes outlined below and attempted to satisfy the requirements and evaluation guidelines issued by the European Union.

C. Evaluation questions and tasks

The ToR specifies the following key evaluation questions:

Outcome level

Where completed as planned, did the activities contribute to the planned results? Where this was so, refer to evidence. Where not so, what factors intervened, and explain how they impacted. Suggest ways that MRGE tried to overcome any problems and how successful this was (or not). Document any changes in the external environment that may have helped or hindered the project. If there were any unplanned results (positive or negative) explain what these were and how they came about. The evaluation should pay attention to and comment on the mainstreaming of gender and other forms of intersectional discrimination and cross-cutting issues in the project.

Impact level

Make an assessment as to whether the results achieved are likely, over the longer term to achieve or contribute to the achievement of the specific objective of the project. If it is unlikely that all or part of the purpose has been achieved, why is this and is this something that could have been foreseen or overcome?

D. Approach and Methodology

The evaluation used a mixed methods approach combining both qualitative and quantitative methods in order to enhance the validity of the results. Qualitative methods have been largely used on primary data sources (interviews, focus groups). Quantitative methods have mostly been used in questionnaires and secondary data sources (monitoring and evaluation data and Project's progress reports).

Quantitative methods were used in the first phase of evaluation in order to establish trends and tendencies and the outputs scrutinized for underlying meanings through the use of qualitative methods (KII, focus groups).

The generic methods have been complemented with theoretical or research-based models and tools with the purpose to answer the evaluation questions on outcomes and impacts to guide data collection, analysis, and drawing conclusions on causal inferences, such as ToC as a model presenting a system of hypothetical causal pathways of the Project.⁶

Theory-based evaluations should answer questions concerning how and why a programme has, or has not, had an impact. A theory-based approach has investigated the causal linkage that relates inputs, activities, and outputs to impacts. Its main goal is to explain why a given change has occurred and how an intervention has caused that change. Thus, a theory-based approach has put under accurate scrutiny all the assumptions that underlie the causal linkage.⁷

Given the duration of the project, answering the question of its long-term impact represents a challenge for the evaluation. It has been necessary to desegregate long-term effects into mid-term measurable goals in order to underpin progress markers leading to the ultimate long-term goals. For this purpose, we used several tools and techniques to underpin progress markers in terms of change in knowledge, skills, attitudes, behavior and policies among the stakeholders, such as *outcome mapping*⁸, *social cognitive theory*⁹, and *several learning theories*¹⁰.

⁶ A 'theory of change' explains how activities are understood to produce a series of results that contribute to achieving the final intended impacts. It can be developed for any level of intervention – an event, a project, a programme, a policy, a strategy or an organization. A theory of change can be developed for an intervention: where objectives and activities can be identified and tightly planned beforehand, or that changes and adapts in response to emerging issues and to decisions made by partners and other stakeholders. Source: Rogers, P. (2014). [Theory of Change, Methodological Briefs: Impact Evaluation 2, UNICEF Office of Research, Florence.](#)

⁷ EuropeAid Cooperation Office, Joint Evaluation Unit (2006), Evaluation Methods for the European Union's External Assistance, Methodological Bases for the Evaluation, Volume 1
https://europa.eu/evaluation_guidelines

⁸ Outcome mapping is a measurement system designed by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) in Canada. Rather than assessing the products of an intervention (e.g. policy change), it focuses mainly on changes in behaviors of the people and organizations affected by the intervention. Source: UNEG Task Force for the Evaluation of Normative Work (2013), UNEG Handbook for Conducting Evaluations of Normative Work in the UN System
<http://www.unevaluation.org>

⁹ Social Cognitive Theory has been used in this evaluation as one of models of analysis of data regarding changes in behavior and agency of the beneficiaries as a result of empowerment. Human agency is characterized by a number of core features that operate through phenomenal and functional consciousness. These include the temporal extension of agency through intentionality and forethought, self-regulation by self-reactive influence, and self-reflectiveness about one's capabilities, quality of functioning, and the meaning and purpose of one's life pursuits. Personal agency operates within a broad network of social structural influences. In these agentic transactions, people are producers as well as products of social systems. Social cognitive theory distinguishes among three modes of agency: direct personal agency, proxy agency that relies on others to act on one's behalf to secure goals, and collective agency exercised through socially coordinated and interdependent effort. Source: Bandura A. (2001) Social Cognitive Theory: An Agentic Perspective *Annu. Rev. Psychol.* 2001. 52:1–26

¹⁰ Two theories that are going to be used in this evaluation as models of data analysis regarding changes in behavior and agency of the beneficiaries as a result of empowerment. A useful framework to understand learning and application of what has been learnt is the experiential learning cycle developed by David Kolb (1984). The experiential learning cycle builds on the notion that people learn from experiences and build new knowledge based on practice. People can use analysis, experimentation and experience to decide what new knowledge is relevant and how it can be applied. Skills and knowledge can then be integrated into existing work and action plans, and thus become the new working practice. Another model, triple-loop learning, developed by Argyris and Schön (1974), complements Kolb's theory, by engaging in 3 levels of learning about successful results and how these can be achieved. In this model, single-loop learning is about reflecting on the rules and procedures so as to improve actions with small adjustments: Are we doing things right? Double-loop learning would be the following question: Are we doing the right things? Do we need to change our choices in what we do and how we do this? Triple-loop learning questions would be: How do we decide what is right? Do we need to change the principles, theories, or visions that underpin our decisions for change? Source: Gordijn F., Ernstman N., Helder J., Brouwer H. (2018), *Reflection Methods Practical Guide for Trainers and Facilitators*, Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation, Wageningen University & Research
<https://research.wur.nl/en/publications/reflection-methods-practical-guide-for-trainers-and-facilitators->

- Questionnaires (of survey tool TrueForm) were sent to 32 participants suggested by Partners and repeated email reminders and phone calls were used to encourage responses.

E. Evaluation Team

Evaluation Team

David Hampson was Team Leader, Researcher, Report-Writer and Editor. His [LinkedIn](#) shows has independent consultancy for MRG, intermittently for over 26 years in 12 roles, including evaluations on global [strategy](#), on global [capacity](#), on [gender](#) discrimination amongst the Batwa ('Pygmies') etc. He served at senior/consultant levels for DFID, UNFAO, IFRC, Oxfam, SAVE, Christian Aid, VSO etc. on humanitarian development in 60+ countries.

Zoran Ostojic was Lead Researcher, Lead Analyst and Lead Writer. His [LinkedIn](#) shows his previous MRG work as Associate Researcher for North Macedonia. as Project Manager and Psychosocial Zoran is a specialist working on anti-violence at the 'Crisis Centre for Man; Serbia' and has extensive qualitative research experience, including with EU INTERREG III C CADSES[1] and IFRC's 'Red Cross Guidelines on Working with Vulnerable Roma.'

Alexandra Pilling ([LinkedIn](#)) was Researcher and Editor. She is currently a final year student at Durham University studying BA Criminology and Sociology. Previously she has carried out research into human rights violations which occurred within high profile criminal trials which led to wrongful convictions.

Ava Batay-an ([LinkedIn](#)) was Layout Editor and Advisor. She is a rights' professional; an Indigenous Person whose early career responded to grassroots disaster and environmental rights concerns. She has since worked with MRG, consulting with them as an independent expert on global strategy, capacity and [East Africa](#); and at senior/consultant levels with CARE, CRS, DFID and VSO. She currently leads WHO's community engagement on COVID-19 Response in the Philippines.

Emma Proux ([LinkedIn](#)) led the quantitative research. She is a Master's student in international relations at Sciences Po Bordeaux, France and a researcher on international migration and development with Laval University, Quebec. She has worked on MRG's Global and Freedom of Religious Belief evaluations, on research projects and data reviews for the Welsh Refugee Council (WRC) and the YWCA as an intern.

Sanja Ostojic ([LinkedIn](#)) worked as an Advisor on quantitative research and providing expertise on the use of learning models in analysis of the data. Sanja works as a Disaster Management Coordinator at the Red Cross of Serbia.

F. Evaluated Intervention

The REILA project is funded by the European Union's Rights, Equality and Citizenship Programme (2014-2020). Implementation of the project started on 1 September 2020, end of the project is planned for 30th September 2022.

The final evaluation of the project took place between August 15 and November 14, 2022.

MRGE is a leader of the consortium implementing the project including two reputable local CSOs: Praxis in Serbia and Idetartozunk in Hungary, both with over a decade of work on protection of the human and minorities rights in their countries, and both present widely in their countries servicing a network of more than 5000 beneficiaries.¹¹

The two target countries of the project, Hungary and Serbia, both have a large Roma population. The Roma have been discriminated against historically. Despite the improvements in legal protection, there are still systematic patterns of discrimination preventing the Roma population from the full realisation of their right to employment, education, health care, and housing. Roma communities tend to live in segregated neighborhoods with low access to public services and poor public infrastructures. Similarly, many Roma face discrimination when looking for employment in relation to their ethnicity and negative stereotypes linked to their community. When it comes to education, Roma school-aged children tend to be victims of severe segregation, placed in classes and schools with only Roma pupils or disproportionately placed in special schools for children with disabilities. Overall, one of the reasons behind these problems is that in Serbia and Hungary, anti-discrimination legislation and measures to make mainstream education, employment, and social policies more inclusive, are not being systematically applied.

In contrast to the high level of continuing discrimination, there are only low numbers of complaints of discrimination affecting Roma persons and only small and recent improvements in awareness of issues. The main reasons behind the lack of reporting and direct access to legal remedies are a lack of trust in the judiciary and public institutions and a widespread belief that reporting discrimination will only worsen the situation and/or open confrontation with the perpetrator/s. Likewise, there is an overwhelming lack of awareness and understanding of non-discrimination legislation and inclusion policies among professionals and public officials, leading to poor case identification and a lack of protection of the rights of Roma victims of human rights violations and discrimination.

The project also has transnational value, as well, as anti-Roma discrimination is a Union-wide challenge. The practical findings of this project (e.g. messaging that resonates with target audiences) will have value at a cross-border level, within the EU and the neighboring countries. The project has supported cross-border cooperation particularly the mutual exchange of learning, experience, and networking of

¹¹ MRGE Baseline questionnaires for partners

CSOs, activists, and legal practitioners (baseline research, lessons learned report and launch event, advocacy at the European and international level), as it is implemented in Hungary and Serbia, two neighboring countries with large Roma populations facing similar challenges, including high levels of discrimination and lack of implementation of the applicable non-discrimination legal and policy frameworks.

The aim of the REILA project is to promote and protect the rights of Roma victims of human rights violations and discrimination by raising society's and stakeholders' awareness, enhancing the implementation of non-discrimination legislation, and empowering Roma to seek legal remedies and be actively involved in access to justice mechanisms, in Hungary and Serbia.

In line with the described objectives, the expected results of this project are: (1) Enhanced knowledge regarding legal remedies to discrimination and access to justice for the Roma; (2) Strengthened capacity and willingness of legal practitioners to provide legal aid advice and representation for Roma and challenge discrimination incidents and patterns; (3) Strengthened capacity of Roma-led NGOs to provide Roma community with information about anti-discrimination law and available legal remedies; (4) Increased access to justice of the Roma community in discrimination cases and human rights violations.

The results were achieved through the following activities:

- Conducting research on discrimination against the Roma, their attitudes to and experience of access to justice, and legal practitioners' knowledge about anti-discrimination legislation which will feed into a baseline report to be used by partners to raise awareness about discrimination against the Roma
- Training legal practitioners on anti-discrimination law and minority rights to strengthen their capacities and enable them to provide legal aid for Roma victims of discrimination and to assist them with litigation in discrimination cases
- Training CSO staff working closely with the Roma community on how to: identify discrimination cases, refer Roma victims of discrimination, conduct advocacy activities and involve Roma community members in decision-making procedures.
- Training Roma mediators and activists to strengthen their capacities on how to provide advice, support, and encouragement to Roma victims of discrimination who may be considering accessing a legal remedy
- Providing free legal aid for Roma victims of discrimination
- Offering legal assistance to report discrimination cases to the equality body to promote better protection and access to justice of Roma victims of discrimination
- Supporting Partners and Roma activists to carry out advocacy actions to fight against discrimination at the local, national and international level
- Publishing lessons learned report to summarize the outcomes of the project and to disseminate the experience at the national and EU level

The intervention logic of the Project is presented in the ToC model in Annex V.

III. Findings and Evaluative Conclusions

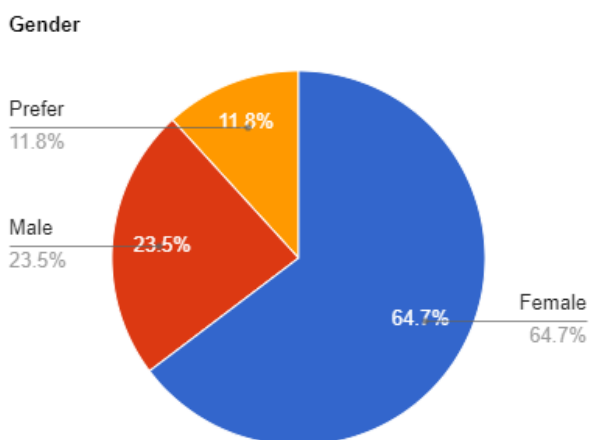
According to ToR the objectives of the final evaluation were to assess the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability, and impact of the project in relation to the objectives and supporting outputs set out in 'Roma Equality through increased Access to Justice' and to provide MRGE with an opportunity for 'structured evaluative learning' with the aim of learning from the programme design and implementation processes. The evaluation was focused on identifying lessons learned and good practice transferable to similar projects MRGE presently implement in Slovakia, Slovenia, Croatia and Bulgaria.

Quantitative Findings

The results of the quantitative findings were very satisfactory (all results are at Annex VI [here](#)). Answers were invited for a score range of 1-7, and no question received an average rating below 6.

The completion rate was 65% with a total of 17 answers. This would be considered a high response rate in most research; this percentage is one indicator of partners and allies to MRGE, and may be considered satisfactory particularly because the questionnaire came at a particularly busy time for both major partners.

Participation in the Team's previous research has usually shown a large or small majority of male respondents. This research delivered the opposite; 11 out of the 15 participants prepared to identify showed a 73% to 27% majority of female respondents. The questionnaire was sent to 15 male and 17 female respondents.

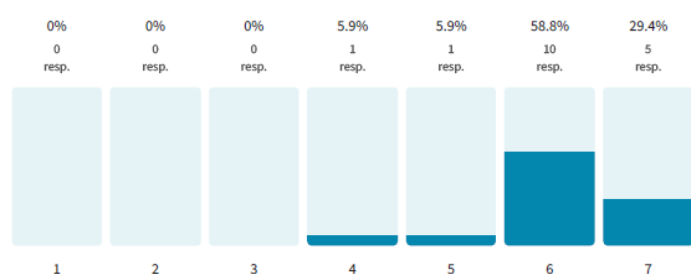


Questionnaire findings are very satisfactory:

Overall, in my opinion, project interventions:
Összességében véleményem szerint az MRGE tevékenységei/nek:
Sve u svemu, po mom mišljenju, Projekat je:

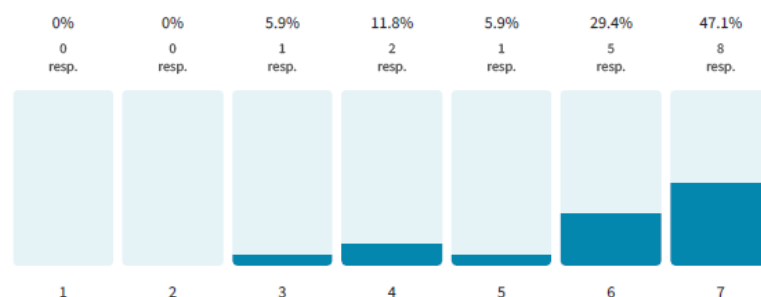
"Had a direct, positive impact"
"Közvetlen, pozitív hatása volt"
"Imao direktan, pozitivan uticaj/efekat"
17 out of 17 answered

6.1 Average rating



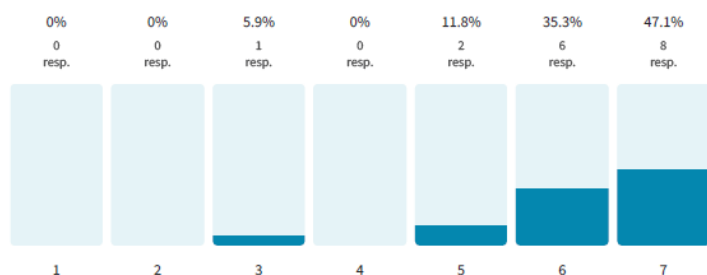
"Helped secure the rights of its beneficiaries"
"Segített romák jogainak biztosításában"
"Pomogao da se obezbede prava korisnika"
17 out of 17 answered

6.0 Average rating



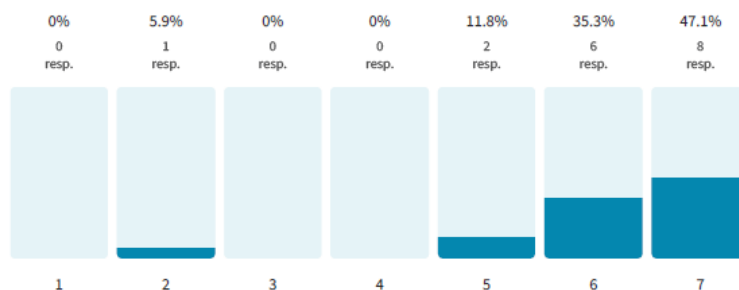
"Responded to the needs and priorities of its beneficiaries"
"Reagált a romák igényeire és prioritásaira"
"Usklađen sa potrebama i prioritetima korisnika"
17 out of 17 answered

6.2 Average rating



"Will have sustainable outcomes / benefits"
"Fenntartható eredményei/hasznai lesznek"
"Projekat će imati održive rezultate / koristi za korisnike"
17 out of 17 answered

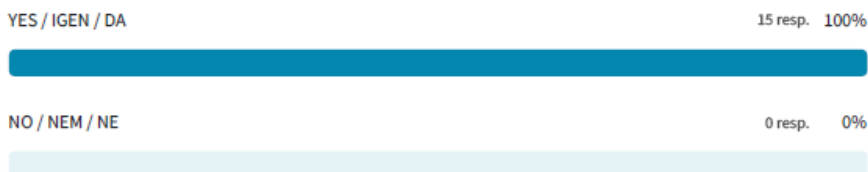
6.1 Average rating



There were outlier results from the above questions on 'responding to beneficiary needs' (as low as 2 / 7 or 29%) and 'sustainable benefits' (as low as 3 / 7 or 43%) showing countervailing dissatisfaction or challenge to overall averages of 6.2 / 7 or 89% and 6.1 / 7 or 82% respectively. The overall perception of MRGE and its role in the program is strongly positive.

Is it MRGE's role to strengthen co-ordination and co-operation?
 Az MRG feladata a koordináció és az együttműködés erősítése?
 Da li je uloga MRGE-a da jača koordinaciju i saradnju?

15 out of 17 answered



This 100% support for the idea that MRGE's role is co-ordination and co-operation is significant and positive. Should MRGE ever wish to move its main focus to other issues, it would need participative discussion and explanation to bring partners and allies along with the shift.

For the text based questions, institutional approaches such as the legal pathway were mentioned:

"Support in terms of more effective legal assistance to victims in the fight against discrimination is very necessary. The capacities of Roma activists and CSOs are insufficient. Work with children is extremely effective"

"There is a need for continuous information sharing, awareness raising and legal support to Roma in reporting and combatting discrimination. (This includes) the need for further awareness raising of the general public, but also of institutions and employers about prohibited behavior.... (and the) importance of free legal aid, but also of strengthening capacities of other activists to recognize discrimination and provide support to victims."

Moreover, a need for more face-to-face work is requested:

"To work directly with Roma side by side with Roma activists. It is not enough to work from the comfort of the office. Problems should be faced directly."

"It is necessary to advocate even more, and work directly with the Roma community."

A need is also expressed for continued awareness-raising:

"It is necessary to work on raising awareness."

"By disseminating information and processing specific cases, the community's awareness of the occurrence of discrimination and protection mechanisms was strengthened. The cases, which were resolved positively, additionally contributed to strengthening the awareness of the community, as well as the awareness of potential perpetrators about prohibited behavior."

Overall, answers implored more actions of this type which demonstrated a belief in this type of work undertaken by MRGE:

"Additional work needs to be done to empower the Roma community so that it knows how to recognize the violation of its rights and react properly."

Qualitative Findings: Relevance of the intervention

OECD/DAC Network on Development Evaluation, evaluation criteria of relevance stands for extent to which the Project activities matched the priorities and needs of the target group, as well as its adherence to the policies of the recipient country and donor organizations.

Evaluation of relevance also comprises review of technical adequacy of the Project, whether it offers the solutions to the problems of the target group and whether it adheres to performance standards in terms of intervention logic and project management, and extent to which the Project is technically adequate to the causes and solution to the problems.¹²

In answering the above questions, several methods were used: the desk study mostly using thematic and content analysis of the project documents, interim and progress reports, and third-party reports, KIIs, FDGs and street forums.

Technical adequacy of the Project was assessed through analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the project design.

Evaluation of the relevance of the Project yielded the following findings:

Baseline studies

Particular strengths of the project were: good context analysis; gap analysis of the protection of Roma human and minority rights; an evidence-based approach applied from the very beginning; and an 'evaluative learning approach' knotted into the Project's design. The Project encompassed baseline studies for each country, and one comparative report, all containing research findings on the state of

¹² Looking Back, Moving Forward Sida Evaluation Manual,' Stefan Molund and Göran Schill, 2004. p.33

discrimination and access to justice for Roma population in Serbia and Hungary. Baseline^{13 14} report and comparative studies¹⁵ were very useful in planning the further steps in the implementation, and were highly praised by KI and allies in the evaluation process.

One of the key informants from Idetartozunk is of the opinion that the main finding of the research is in identifying various obstacles to achieving the rights of the beneficiaries and a finding that they do not know where to turn to for assistance. Another informant from the same organization thinks that it was good to start with the research, but also proposed a more participatory approach for the future baseline studies.



Photo: M from Stara Pazova fought anti-Roma discrimination in the past. Her motivation in REILA was to use her experiences and skills to help her fellow citizens.

The baseline studies provided analysis of the legal context in terms of anti-discrimination legislation and its implementation. One informant in Serbia said that there were “...no similar reports in which the users' statements about their immediate experiences were also included.” In other words, the special value of the baseline studies is in displaying the previous experience of the beneficiaries with the legal system, burdened with distrust, disappointment, anger, fear and even shame whenever they try to ask for what should be guaranteed to them by the state. Elaboration of the lived experiences affects the level of reader's understanding and compassion. To illustrative of this effect is the excerpt from the baseline study for Serbia that follows: *‘Roma woman with university education, stated that despite the fact that she had never felt direct discrimination, she had a feeling that prejudice towards her ethnic origin had been an obstacle to her full social and professional recognition. According to her, during her schooling and studies she had to be twice as successful as other children and students to achieve*

the same result. Then, despite applying for jobs in the public sector and private companies countless times, she had never been offered an employment contract longer than a few months, and the private

¹³ Király, K.J., Bernáth G., Setét, J. (2021) Roma in Hungary: The Challenges of Discrimination, Minority Rights Group Europe (MRGE), Budapest

¹⁴ Bašić, G. (2021) Roma in the Republic of Serbia: The Challenges of Discrimination, Minority Rights Group Europe (MRGE), Budapest

¹⁵ Spítálszky, A. (2021) Roma in the Republic of Serbia and Hungary: The Challenges of Discrimination – A Comparative Report, Budapest

business she ran independently was burdened by the prejudices of service users towards her ethnicity. Finally, her children faced the same problems she had faced during schooling - being ignored by other children, feeling ashamed when others talked about Roma with humiliation and ridicule, and less interest from teachers in their educational achievements compared to other pupils.'

The assessments made in the baselines served as a valuable resource for the further planning and implementation process.

It was correctly presumed - and later confirmed by the baseline study - is that deeply-rooted discrimination is the main barrier to Roma people's unhindered access to justice in both countries. This causes a lack of systematic application of anti-discrimination legislation and measures to make mainstream education, employment and social policies more inclusive, both in Serbia and Hungary.

The baseline studies presented and integrated findings of many third-party studies to support an argument that despite the improvements in the legal protection from discrimination in Serbia and Hungary, there are still systematic patterns of discrimination preventing Roma population from the full realisation of their right to employment, education, health care and housing.

Identification of the needs gap

Over the past decades, the mainstream approach to the Roma situation in Europe was to try and improve their socio-economic position. However, this Project proposed a different route to the same goal, through empowerment of primary beneficiaries. Empowering of the beneficiaries enables them to stand for themselves and protect their rights, alone or in cooperation with their representatives and trustees, and no longer depend on the good will, discretion and voluntarism of state officials and local authorities.

Lack of access to justice and awareness of legal remedies concerning anti-discrimination legislation among Roma population, local authorities, government officials, even among legal professional is one of the main bottlenecks and gaps identified within the system which prevent more significant development including both minority population but as well as hindering development of the overall society. The overall development losses and costs due to exclusion are well elaborated in a Research paper by World Bank¹⁶

¹⁶ Robayo-Abril, M., Millán, N. (2019) Breaking the Cycle of Roma Exclusion In the Western Balkans, International Bank for Reconstruction and Development / The World Bank, Washington

Adherence to the priorities and policies of the recipient countries and EU

Findings of thematic and content analysis, later confirmed through KIIs and FGDs, confirmed a coherence of the Project objectives to the policies and the priorities of the stakeholders.

Thus the Project's activities are coherent to key national strategies in Serbia and Hungary as "National Social inclusion Strategy 2011-2020 of the Republic of Serbia in the period 2016–2025," and the Hungarian National Social Inclusion Strategy (Hungarian abbreviation: 'the MNTFS') which was published in 2011, targeting the inclusion of disadvantaged children and Roma people living in poverty over the ten-year period of 2011-2020. The strategy was adopted by a government resolution in December 2011, followed by a revision in 2014. The strategy aims to alleviate the disadvantages of Roma communities in general in the areas of employment, education and housing over the ten-year period.¹⁷

The action is also relevant to the priorities of the Office of the High Commission on Human Rights (OHCHR) in Belgrade. During the implementation of the Project the partners sought to build a close relationship with the OSCE Mission that continues to be involved in anti-discrimination activities.

Furthermore, the initiative will serve to contribute to consistent and coherent implementation of Union law, it will contribute to the implementation of the 2020-2030 EU Roma Strategic Framework, and it will strengthen future similar policies.

Complementarity with similar programs/projects

The Project focuses on access to justice, advocacy, capacity building of Roma communities and authorities, and expanding the role and skills of Roma mediators. It complements the ROMACTED program (implemented in Serbia), and ROMED2 program (implemented in Hungary). which has been focusing on mediation and building working relationships with Local Authorities since 2017.

It complements other projects implemented in the Region, such as a GIZ project implemented in Serbia which aims to fight discrimination against the Roma. In the framework of the project GIZ provided training for different target audiences (medical professionals, social workers, teachers etc.), and launched a campaign for awareness raising among the Roma about the available legal remedies in case of discrimination.

¹⁷ Király, K.J., Bernáth G., Setét, J. (2021) Roma in Hungary: The Challenges of Discrimination, Minority Rights Group Europe (MRGE), Budapest

Weak points of the Project design

Among the significant weak points of the project design is the short time period of work with the primary beneficiaries. Ten months out of 24 months was the total duration. This was one of the most common complaints expressed by key informants and Project beneficiaries and allies: a lawyer from Hungary asked about sustainability and stated that it would be much better if the Project continues for some more time to produce more sustainable results, as ‘iron is forged when hot.’ She feels it is a pity for the work to stop now when people are starting to grasp it.

This ‘omission’ is mitigated by MRGE’s two reputable local CSOs: Praxis in Serbia and Idetartozunk in Hungary, who have worked continuously with primary beneficiaries offering services of legal aid and advocacy, before the onset of this activity as a part of the Project.

Another area which could benefit from some reflection from both donor and MRG is the overall low budget and therefore of some areas within it. Most pertinent is the low financial compensation rates for the field workers, as highlighted by several key informants and allies, particularly the mediators, many of whom are reputable Roma activists working for many years with vulnerable people. In the Project they have an important role of finding cases, sharing information and educating beneficiaries which is reflected on primary and secondary reach of the Project, thus on its effectiveness, impact and particularly efficiency. On a low overall budget, the allocated figure for evaluation may also prove to be a less than sustainable constraint.¹⁸

In addition, some informants and beneficiaries suggested opening of the field offices, so as to make services more accessible and to improve fieldwork conditions, quotations: one of the beneficiaries interviewed in Hungary stated that the important change would be to open an offices in the segregated settlements where people could report their complaints and where complaints may be connected to similar problems of people in other settlements/areas.

Conclusions on relevance

The Project was based on data compiled through well conducted assessment of needs of the beneficiaries and context analysis. The Project encompassed two baseline studies, one for each country, on the state of discrimination and access to justice. The baseline reports including a comparative study were praised as very useful in planning of the further steps in the implementation, and are highly praised by KII and allies in the evaluation process.

The Project’s activities are coherent to key national strategies in Serbia and Hungary the initiative has

¹⁸ The evaluation post-tax budget was 3,200 E, and took 5 months, part time, for 6 evaluators who will receive c.10 E per hour; less than the [UK](#) minimum wage for a 21-year old. Thorough work with a team which is not mostly inspired by money is a choice. But such rates, over time, lose for donors and MRG a competitive edge in attracting high quality evaluators. This may usefully be a topic for pre-project discussion between donors and MRG.

and will continue to contribute to consistent and coherent implementation of Union law, including the implementation of the '2020-2030 EU Roma Strategic Framework'.

The Project activities complement similar projects and programmes implemented in the Region and its added value is an empowerment approach towards primary beneficiaries who are able to participate and contribute to defending their rights, and no longer depend on the good will, discretion and voluntarism of the state officials and local authorities.

Effectiveness of the intervention

Effectiveness is an evaluation criteria which implies the extent to which the Project's objectives were achieved as a result of implemented activities. Evaluation of the effectiveness normally focuses on two aspects of planned achievement. The first one answers the question on whether the planned outputs were achieved. The evaluation of the Project's outputs was based on data and information obtained through desk study and review of the project documents, interim and progress reports, interim evaluation and monitoring reports, etc.

The second part of the effectiveness evaluation is more complex and focuses on Project's outcomes as results of the implemented interventions, changes in state of the affairs, and change of the conditions of the primary beneficiaries, based on comparison of the situation before Project's initiation with the situation at the end of the Project.

The evaluation of the outcomes were based on analysis of the data obtained through KIIs, FGDs and street forums. The baseline reports for Serbia and Hungary were used as a source of data at the beginning of the Project.

Project's planned outputs

Planned outputs were mostly met, such as conferences and meetings held, reports published, provision of legal aid to the beneficiaries, legal assistance before the national equality bodies, number of advocacy meetings and shadow reports.

Some outputs were partly met; 26 lawyers were trained instead of planned 30, 25 CSO staff out of the initially planned 30, 27 activists were trained instead of 30. The reasons for that were the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions in both countries, which required a challenging process of adaptation, as the Partners needed to shift from in-person to online education. This included transformation of the training manuals to an interactive e-learning material and development of a highly interactive online platform.

Project's planned outcomes

The evaluation of achieved outcomes uses a baseline against final results. It strives to answer the question of whether the activities implemented led to the Project's objectives or not, and whether the intervention resulted in positive and direct effects on the situation of the primary beneficiaries.

The overall objective of the project was defined in the project proposal and later in the Grant Agreement that partners signed with the European Commission. It therefore promotes and protects the rights of Roma victims of human rights violations and discrimination¹⁹ by achieving the objectives of raising society's and stakeholders' awareness, enhancing implementation of non-discrimination legislation and empowering Roma to seek legal remedies in Hungary and Serbia.

Several clusters of activities including research, advocacy, training, networking and exchange of the experiences, legal aid, providing assistance /brokering before national equality bodies and others, were designated and planned to influence awareness and deeper understanding of the facets and scope of this problem.

Objective 1: Raising society and stakeholders' awareness

Findings of the initial needs assessments, analysis of the third-party reports, later confirmed by baseline research data for Serbia and Hungary pointed out that there is an overwhelming lack of awareness and understanding on non-discrimination legislation and inclusion policies among professionals and public officials, leading to poor case identification and lack of protection of the rights of Roma victims of human rights violations and discrimination. The first cluster of activity to tackle this issue was baseline research:

A. Research on discrimination against the Roma and their access to justice

The Partners conducted both desk and empirical research through focus group interviews with different groups: Roma community members, Roma women, Roma activists, legal practitioners and CSO staff. The research took place between October and December 2020.

The results of the research were formulation of baseline studies for both countries, and a comparative study presenting findings in a concise way. These studies were widely used in the following phases and fed into the content of the training for lawyers, CSO staff and Roma activists. Partners also used the findings for their advocacy activity both at the local/national and international level to raise awareness on discrimination against the Roma. The reports were presented at all conferences where legal practitioners, CSOs, Roma activists, representatives of the NHRIs, and relevant decision-makers participated, and have been disseminated widely in the later phases of the project.

¹⁹ Grant Agreement that partners signed with the European Commission

B. Advocacy to encourage implementation and/or adoption of anti-discrimination legislation and policies

Partners engaged in advocacy efforts on a local, national and EU level which included meetings with decision-makers, dissemination of accurate research data and proven practice, production and submitting of shadow reports to mechanisms as UPR to the OHCHR, and reports submitted to EU Commission for Serbia which is pre-accession process to the EU.

One KI from MRGE explained that the partners focused on advocacy efforts at all levels, eg. local, national and EU, with a main focus on local and national levels. In total, 10 advocacy meetings were held. On a question of how the advocacy efforts may be improved in the future, some informants answered that post-Covid it would be better to organize more proper meetings in Brussels, face-to-face with EU decision-makers.

Many KIs suggested the communication and cooperation with the state officials were especially difficult in Hungary, as, according to the baseline study, there are the barriers imposed by the state on external financial assistance which makes increasingly difficult for international organizations to provide support to local CSOs. As one of KI explained there are also many other problems in Hungary :

“In recent years the Hungarian government changed attitudes to CSOs with the consequences that many achievements were lost, and human rights defenders became weaker, particularly to work on crucial issues such as desegregation, litigation and development. Many donors that had headquarters in Budapest, relocated in the past years, so that ERRC moved to Berlin and OSI relocated to Brussels. Under political pressures many human rights organizations shifted their focus for substantial matters to supporting a ‘populist A’ against a ‘populist B.’” Overall, she described the timing of the Project as ‘difficult, with many unfavorable changes yet to come’.

In Serbia, the relationship with the state was not perfect but somewhat better than in Hungary.

Successful legal cases particularly those before CPE provided the partners with effective advocacy tools and arguments, as explained by KI working for Praxis in Serbia.

She pointed out that the baseline studies were very useful, as other reports doesn’t contain information on beneficiaries’ direct experiences with the discrimination, which was helpful in regard to the advocacy: *the Law on Prohibition of Discrimination was amended in Serbia during May and June of the current year, and in the procedure the baseline study and experience from direct work were referred to Praxis, along with other NGOs, participated in the procedure, and some of their solutions were adopted.*

Another KI from Praxis said about advocacy, *that Praxis is the executive partner of the UN on the issue of statelessness, that they often cooperate with state institutions within the framework of several projects. Relations are normally cooperative and friendly, so that they work cooperatively towards solutions and*

so influence the awareness of professionals and many issues are solved through mediation of the lawyers in disputes involving the beneficiaries.

C. Lessons learned report and exchange of experience between partner CSOs.

The partners prepared a publication²⁰ on lessons learned compiling the good practice examples to be disseminated further in the advocacy purposes and improvement of the design of the similar projects in the future.

Objective 2: enhancing implementation of non-discrimination legislation

The Partners organized the following clusters of the activities to achieve the above objectives:

D. Training legal professionals on anti-discrimination law/minority rights;

E. Training Roma-led CSOs on anti-discrimination law/legal remedies;

F. Training Roma mediators and activists on anti-discrimination/minority law/legal remedies;

Both Baseline reports exposed the barriers to the exercise and protection of the rights of Roma and anti-discrimination policies/ They were related to the low level of knowledge and experience of lawyers and other experts in public administration about human rights, and their lack of motivation to implement strategic measures and regulations to improve the position of Roma.

The concept of the training methodology in the Project is determined as action-oriented and participatory with partners designing the training materials according to the needs of the different target groups (legal practitioners, CSOs, Roma mediators and activists). It is learner-centred (i.e. geared to meet actual gaps in the participants' knowledge and motivation, and flexible to different learner needs); dialogue oriented (encouraging participants to ask questions, especially concerning the driving forces behind structural discrimination, and facilitating dialogue and sharing between participants). Participation and application of skills-learning throughout the course was key, so that it was not theoretical but acted as a bridge to immediate practical action by the trainees in the weeks following the training.²¹

For the purpose of this evaluation, some learning theories were used to analyze the value and merit of the training activity in the Project.

²⁰ Luković, M, Muhi, E.,Spitálszky, A. (2022) Building trust in equality: Enhancing access to justice for Roma in Hungary and Serbia, Minority Rights Group Europe (MRGE), Budapest

²¹ Grant Agreement with the European Commission

There are several learning theories that appeared in the last decades that influenced modern education and teaching approaches. One of the most influential is the experiential learning cycle developed by David Kolb (1984).²² The experiential learning cycle builds on the notion that people learn from experiences and build new knowledge based on practice. People can use analysis, experimentation and experience to decide what new knowledge is relevant and how it can be applied. Skills and knowledge can then be integrated into existing work and action plans, and thus become the new working practice. Another theory of triple-loop learning, developed by Argyris and Schön (1974), complements Kolb's theory, by engaging in 3 levels of learning about successful results and how these can be achieved. In this model, single-loop learning is about reflecting on the rules and procedures so as to improve actions with small adjustments: *Are we doing things right?* Double-loop learning would be the following question: *Are we doing the right things? Do we need to change our choices in what we do and how we do this?* Triple-loop learning questions would be: *How do we decide what is right? Do we need to change the principles, theories, or visions that underpin our decisions for change?*

For the comparison, traditional education and teaching approaches are basically subject-centered, keep learners in the position of passive recipients and are based merely on memorizing subject-matter without linking the knowledge to experience or reflection or discussion of any sort.

The teaching methodology used in the Project falls into the category of a modern teaching approach. It is learner-centered, allows reflection and co-learning through dialogue and discussion on topics connected to life experiences. It allows learners to understand issues in a deeper sense, and to derive their own conclusions and to experiment with the various options for further practical application of acquired knowledge and a new cycle of learning. The benefit of such learning in comparison with the traditional education is of turning learners to the environment, people and lived experiences instead of subjects and theories. This improves not only their knowledge but also other competences and skills, attitudes (values, beliefs, basic assumptions or mental schemes, etc.) and overall potential for activism and participation in new experiences.

Participants in the training highly praised the content and methodology of teaching. Some excerpts from interviews are provided below:

One of the lawyers working in the Project in Hungary asked about the training provided to lawyers and its effects on knowledge skills and attitudes, he describes the training as 'a high-level' one, particularly on the topic of equal treatment legislation and procedures. He said that he learned a lot of things he could later apply in his practice, although he is not a novice in the subject matter.

²² Gordijn F., Ernstman N., Helder J., Brouwer H. (2018), Reflection Methods Practical Guide for Trainers and Facilitators, Wageningen Centre for Development Innovation, Wageningen University & Research

Another lawyer is also working on the Project in Hungary. She has previous experience working with various NGOs in discrimination cases. Asked a question about what worked the best in the Project, she immediately pointed out the online training.

A Roma activist and a social worker in Hungary thinks that the training was practical, and has learned a lot about equal treatment legislation and procedures.

A lawyer from Serbia, answering to the question about the training, said that it was one of the great Project's products. Representative of the CPE in Serbia Emilija Spasović, who participated in teaching through webinars, highly praised the course, its content, design and how it was adapted to the needs of participants. Feedback she received by the participants was that the course was very functional and applicable with a lot of discussion.

One informant from Hungary had a countervailing view to the majority opinion. From discussion with participants, she described the training as difficult, tiresome, requiring a lot of reading, with content difficult to understand for many and requiring access to the internet. A co-worker at the same organization countered that 24/7 assistance had been available to participants. Not too much weight can be given to an opinion from one source, but the evaluation team has, in previous research of MRG projects, noted concerns about over-complicated language and MRG itself has made great efforts to provide more and more offline content as projects are adapted and replicated.

Objective 3: empowering Roma to seek legal remedies

To achieve the above objective the partners organized the following clusters of activities:

G. Provide legal aid advice to community via outreach;

H. Providing/brokering legal assistance before the national equality body;

According to the baseline studies prospects of unhindered access to justice for the population of Roma in Hungary and Serbia is rather grim, if external intervention and support isn't provided.

The Baseline study for Hungary quotes the 2016 survey of the EU Agency for Fundamental Rights (FRA) on the selected findings about the Roma community and discrimination in nine EU member states (including Hungary), and describe it as the most comprehensive study in recent years, clearly showing the reasons underlying the obstacles to access to justice faced by Roma.

According to the survey, most members of the Roma community do not report any violations that they suffer: only 6 percent of the Hungarian survey subjects reported any violation experienced by them to a

government agency, despite the fact that 32 percent had encountered some form of discrimination in at least one area of their daily lives over past five years.

Another widespread issue is that 85% of survey respondents did not know any civil society stakeholder or any competent government agency where they could seek guidance. A serious problem of parallel significance is that only 31 per cent of the subjects were aware of the fact that there is a law in Hungary that prohibits discrimination, while 41 per cent guessed that no such law exists.

The Baseline study for Serbia, quotes 'Social Relations Between Ethnic Communities in Serbia' (Institute of Social Sciences, 2020). According to the findings of the research, 71% of Roma citizens did not report discrimination, while out of the 23% of incidents of discriminatory treatment and behaviour that were actually reported, just 4% resulted in the authorities eliminating the consequences of discrimination.

The lack of legal cases consequently leads to the false impression that the legal services are not even necessary: 'Without legal cases, public interest diminishes, together with the acquired knowledge. As a further consequence, the decline in human rights advocacy capacities leads to apathy: those in need feel that they have no one who can help them, nor would they be able to pay for such support even if it were available. As a result, cases will run out, giving the impression that professional help is not even necessary. This, of course, leads to a further decline.'²³

The declared aim of the project is to create a virtuous circle whereby increased Roma involvement in access to justice mechanisms, leads to more and better cases being filed, which leads to benefits to Roma communities which in turn increases trust in legal remedies and lawyers and encourages yet more cases to come forward. Many KIs said that one of the main Project's achievement was in establishing a missing service of legal aid and successes which later followed:

Lawyer from Idetartozunk said that the impact of the Project can be seen in the fact that the beneficiaries realised that they have somebody to turn to to get assistance with discrimination and equal treatment issues. She described that until 2016 existed an institution that provided free legal aid in Hungary. Today it is very complicated to access and many beneficiaries eventually give up trying.

She explained that the Project had an effect on access to justice as it yielded many successful cases, giving an example of the case in Kisvaszar where beneficiaries managed to achieve their housing rights.

Informant from Idetartozunk said that there is always a need for such a service, because Government established some national systems but without much knowledge about discrimination, so the Project helped to reestablish some missing services. In Hungary, the former independent Equal Treatment Authority was merged with the Office of the Commissioner for Fundamental Rights and became the

²³ Király, K.J., Bernáth G., Setét, J. (2021) Roma in Hungary: The Challenges of Discrimination, Minority Rights Group Europe (MRGE), Budapest

Directorate-General for Equal Treatment as of January 1, 2021. Many local offices had been closed and the new agency changed the staff, laying off many experienced former personnel.

About the impact she answers that the Project managed to assemble and to put in function a small network of legal specialists, so that the beneficiaries have some entity to turn to, realizing that it is possible to complain and to win the case against local authorities.

About the reach of the Project, following are some opinions from the informants:

Informant from Praxis stated that it is difficult to measure the spread of the effects of the project, but he believes that it is large. Two cases when two Romani women were returned to work by order of the gender equality administration because they were fired as members of a minority group, which was an obvious case of discrimination, a key informant stated in the settlement "X" ²⁴in one of the largest aggregations of Roma in mixed settlements, although the population is heterogeneous. He states that the settlement has thousands of inhabitants and that the information about returning to work had a great impact. He stated that information is being spread because Praxis has been working with activists, NGOs, mediators, and teaching assistants for a long time. They also use social networks through which they keep in touch with numerous partners. He also stated that some Roma settlements have a Facebook page.

Another KI from Praxis, believes that within the Project, a significant number of stakeholders e.g. activists and lawyers, were trained and were able to share the knowledge and raise the issue on the agenda with a greater focus on Roma. This education raised the capacities of people who can take it forward in their own work. Through mediators the partners reached a greater number of people. A number of people are not willing to report and people fear victimization so it is harder to help them. They fear that they may not get another job if they report and the report is held against them but at least their awareness is being raised and they are now able to know that they need to stand up against it.

Some beneficiaries from the communities not originally covered by the Project have heard about it and approached for assistance as in case described below (Textbox1):

TEXT BOX 1:

SL is a Roma activist in the B as a representative of the local community he became a member of an initiative started by the National Roma Minority Government aiming to promote sport activities for Roma children, named "JF." In the meantime they expanded their goals and wanted to include adults in the initiative as well. SL was president of the association of 10 people with a task to implement the effort of bringing sport activities

²⁴ 'Anonymised'

to Roma communities. One of the plans was to establish a football club, named “ D” which existed in the 1970s when SL himself played for that local team.

With financial support from local donors, the association put up a local pitch for the training of local football teams. The team was properly registered and applied to the municipal authorities to grant them permission to use local pitch to organize football matches.

Initially the Mayor seemed supportive of the idea but soon started to equivocate on the final decision. SL found out from other municipal deputies that the mayor was saying in a closed meeting that he wouldn’t allow Roma to use the pitch, because they will destroy the locker rooms, and that many Roma from different areas will start to flock to their municipality.

This case received a lot of publicity as a national TV station was followed by interview requests from many other journalists. SL stated that it was obvious that behind municipal obstruction was discrimination and the public was furious. SL and his associates received a lot of support from the media as well from citizens who participated in social media forums. He said that other members of his community firmly supported him.

Still, such development didn’t encourage Municipal authorities to change their mind. SL learned for the first time from REILA legal advisers and managed by chance to reach them through his friend. They decided to help and filed the complaint before the equality body in Hungary. The final decision of the institution is still pending.

SL was interviewed by the evaluators and suggested that the Project needed more publicity. He thinks partners should have included more people who are “invested” in work with Roma problems for years and with such issues from before and on a continuous basis, so they can contribute more than professional staff hired for the project purposes.

Conclusions on effectiveness

Most of the planned outputs, such as conferences and meetings held, reports published, provision of legal aid to the beneficiaries, legal assistance before the national equality bodies, number of advocacy meetings and shadow reports submitted were met.

A coronavirus-induced reduction in training participants is not judged to have had a significant effect on the outcomes of the Project, as a sufficient number of trained lawyers and mediators were available for the further activities and direct work with the primary beneficiaries.

In order to achieve the Project's objective: Raising society's and stakeholders' awareness three clusters of activities were devised: Research on discrimination against the Roma and their access to justice; Advocacy to encourage implementation and/or adoption of anti-discrimination legislation and policies, and Lessons learned report and exchange of experience between partner CSOs. The baseline studies were widely used in the following phases and fed into the content of the training. Partners also used the findings for their advocacy activity both at the local/national and international level to raise awareness on discrimination against the Roma.

Partners engaged in advocacy efforts on a local, national and EU level which included meetings with the decision-makers, dissemination of accurate research data and proven practice, production and submitting of shadow reports.

Successful legal cases particularly those before the national equality body provided the partners with effective advocacy tools and arguments. Research findings and proven practice were used as an argumentation that contributed to amending of the *Law on Prohibition of Discrimination* in Serbia in June 2022.

In order to achieve the Project's objective: enhancing implementation of non-discrimination legislation, several clusters of training activities were organised. All clusters were evaluated as successful in terms of effectiveness. A learner-centered modern teaching approach was used. This incorporated reflection and co-learning through dialogue and discussion of life experiences, allowing learners to more deeply understand issues, draw their own conclusions and experiment with practical application of acquired knowledge and a new cycle of learning. Such learning turns learners to the environment and people instead to subjects and theories which improves their potential for active participation in new experiences.

In order to achieve the Project's objective: Empowering Roma to seek legal remedies, two clusters of activities were devised: (i) Provide legal aid advice to the community via outreach; (ii) Providing/brokering legal assistance before the national equality body. Both are evaluated as successful in terms of effectiveness. A significant number of trained stakeholder e.g. activists and lawyers, have been able to share the knowledge and raise the issue on the agenda with a greater focus on Roma. Educate and increase capacities of people who can take it forward in their own work. Through mediators the project reached a greater number of people. Fear of victimization is still an issue. But at least awareness is being raised and some Roma people are now able to know that they need to stand up against it

This part of the Project was effective as it contributed to the knowledge, perceptions and beliefs of most beneficiaries connected to the Project. Some participated fully in the Project, and directly feel positive outcomes/outputs in line with their own 'felt needs'.

On the other hand, some aspects of the project design and implementation open the space for improvement, as several KIs were of the opinion that the Project needed more publicity. In some communities significant results were achieved in terms of secondary reach and building up a base of supporters and allies of the project through regular cooperation with media and use of social networks.

Sustainability of the intervention

Sustainability represents an extent of activity/results continuity beyond the programme funding period. In other words, sustainability means the continuation of benefits from a development intervention after major development assistance has been completed, and the probability of continued long-term benefits.

In the Projects's document several factors and strategies were outlined that should assure long-term sustainability of the results of the Project.

Firstly, the project activities were locally owned as the national partners played the most important roles and were recognised as the main bearers of the activities in their countries. National partners assured participation of other local activists and CSOs forming the national network, assuring regular contact with the beneficiaries throughout the countries. The focus was on enhancing cooperation and communication so as to coordinate the activities more smoothly and to assure regular information and knowledge exchange, and to galvanize empowerment and capacity building efforts.

Evaluation of the Project showed that most of the KIs who worked in partners' organizations highly praised the cooperation and communication among the MRGE and partners, some defining it as a best part of the Project.

Asked a question about what worked the best in the Project, Lawyer in Hungary explained that her favorite parts were the online training and regular monthly meetings with partners to consult about the cases.

In response to the same question, KI from Serbia, said that for her it was cooperation and coordination with MRGE and Idetartozunk Association, as they had regular meetings to discuss the ongoing activities. This assured a quick adaptation. She gave an example of redesigning the training curriculum to an online format. She said to be surprised with such smooth cooperation, whilst her partners were not even located in her country. She added that the focus of the meetings was on the essence and a need to have a work done, and not so much on the formalities. One of her responsibilities was to develop a training curriculum, and she had huge support from the partners and expert designers, developing an interactive course in an online format.

KI from Hungary described the cooperation with the partners as flexible and based on reality more than on a plan which is good. On the other hand she thinks that the planning included too much detail which

caused some problems in the implementation. Her opinion is that planning should be more flexible and decision making in the hands of direct implementers.

Secondly, focus was on capacity development and empowerment which both should assure a lasting result. The training was given in online format and will be available to partners after the Project for future activities.

Lawyer from Hungary believes that the results of the Project will be sustainable as it brought about research and training. She thinks that it is possible to assure funding for this type of work in the future, particularly if they focus on strategic approaches that would cover whole Roma communities and open questions of misused EU funding in housing.

KI from Serbia stated that in terms of sustainability, it is important that the capacities of activists and civil society organizations were raised through the training. She stated that with better knowledge of the phenomenon of discrimination, they were able to come up with the more interesting cases.

A member of Praxis in Serbia believes the sustainability of the project lies in the 30 members who were trained, lawyers, COs etc. who can use their knowledge going forward. Also believed it to be a sustainable project as beneficiaries had positive outcomes from cases and therefore would hopefully encourage others to use the legal mechanism in future. For those who did not want to report seeing this success and being equipped with knowledge may change what happens in future.

Thirdly, achievement of the advocacy goals, which influenced the change of attitudes, perception, even some laws will surely contribute to the overall sustainability.

KI from Praxis stated that another important thing contributing to sustainability are the baseline reports on the situation of human and minority rights of the Roma in Serbia and Hungary, because there were no similar reports containing immediate experiences of the beneficiaries. The report covered analysis of weaknesses of the legal frameworks in Hungary and Serbia, as well, and options of how to improve the situation. She also stated that the Law on Prohibition of Discrimination was amended in Serbia during May and June of the current year, and Praxis with other CSOs participated in the procedure, referring to the reports and experience from direct work with cases of discrimination, and some of their proposals were adopted to the new text of the Law.

Finally, empowering cooperation among the partners was transferred to the communities and primary beneficiaries, and had an effect on their perception, beliefs, motivation, skills and competencies so as to take greater control of their own lives and contribute to inclusive local development.²⁵ About the latest will be more words in the section *Impact of the intervention*.

²⁵ OECD/Noya A. Clarence E., "Community capacity building: fostering economic and social resilience. Project outline and proposed methodology", 26-27 November 2009, working document, CFE/LEED, OECD, www.oecd.org/dataoecd/54/10/44681969.pdf?contentId=44681970

Conclusions on sustainability

The project activities were locally owned as the national partners played the most important roles and were recognised as the main bearers of the activities in their countries. National partners assured participation of other local activists and CSOs forming the national network, assuring regular contact with the beneficiaries throughout the countries.

Secondly, the main project methodology involves capacity building which includes training of the legal professionals, activists and mediators. The training is made in online format and will be available to partners after the Projects end for future education and for further development of the program.

Thirdly, achievement of the advocacy efforts, change of some policies and even legal frameworks are going to resonate for years to come. In addition a lot of research materials and reports and reports on lessons learned and good practice will be available for future advocacy efforts.

Fourthly, empowering cooperation among the partners was transferred to the communities and primary beneficiaries influencing their perception, beliefs and motivation, skills and competencies so as to take greater control of their own lives and also contributes to inclusive local development.

In the project document the factors and strategies were outlined which should assure long-term sustainability of the effects and results of the Project. The strategies were effectively implemented which leads to the conclusion that there is a high probability that the results and effects will be sustained beyond the Project's funding period.

Impact of the intervention

Impact of the intervention implies totality of positive and negative, primary and secondary long-term effects produced by a development intervention, directly or indirectly, intended or unintended.

Evaluation of impact is more *user-oriented* in contrast to *goal-oriented* evaluations focusing more on effectiveness.²⁶

Earlier in the text, reviews were the effect of the Projects from the point of view of its outputs and outcomes in accordance with the Project's objectives, against the data from the baseline study. However, to assess impact it is necessary to learn about the point of view of the primary beneficiaries, to evidence changes in their knowledge, behavior, perception, belief system, readiness and motivation to take responsibility and agency for their betterment.

²⁶ Looking Back, Moving Forward Sida Evaluation Manual,' Stefan Molund and Göran Schill, 2004. p.33

This evaluation of impact is theory-based and complemented with theoretical or research-based models and tools. The purpose is to answer the evaluation questions on outcomes and impacts to guide data collection, analysis, and to draw conclusions on causal inferences. In addition, for the purpose of this evaluation a ToC model was developed to get better insights into a results chain and a system of hypothetical causal pathways of the Project. Please see Annex V

Data for the evaluation of impact was collected using KIIs, FDGs and street forums also with the members of the target group. As the conceptual frameworks for analysis of the data, we used the concept of *outcome mapping* and *social cognitive theory*. The outcome mapping is a concept developed by International Development Research Centre (IDRC) in Canada. The outcome mapping proposes a set of progress indicators that may indicate a high probability that the results of the intervention will have a long-term impact. In evaluation we used the basic approach from the outcome mapping as rather than assessing the products of an intervention (e.g. policy change), it focuses mainly on changes in behaviors of the people and organizations affected by the intervention. However the system of progress indicators in this evaluation was based on Social Cognitive Theories²⁷ key components of (self-efficacy, behavioral capability, expectations, expectancies, self-control, observational learning and reinforcements) to assess the stages of the sequence of change from the initial beneficiaries' position (passive aid recipients) to their empowered assumption of responsibility for their own betterment and contribution towards inclusive social development.

According to Social Cognitive Theory human agency is characterized by a number of core features that operate through phenomenal and functional consciousness. These include the temporal extension of agency through intentionality and forethought, self-regulation by self-reactive influence, and self-reflectiveness about one's capabilities, quality of functioning, and the meaning and purpose of one's life pursuits. Personal agency operates within a broad network of social structural influences. In these agentic transactions, people are producers as well as products of social systems. Social Cognitive Theory distinguishes between three modes of agency: direct personal agency; proxy agency (which relies on others to act on one's behalf to secure desired outcomes); and collective agency (exercised through socially coordinated and interdependent effort).²⁸ The theory is presented in Figure 3:

²⁷ Used widely in development projects/programs, see: Rogers, Patricia (2014). Theory of Change: Methodological Briefs - Impact Evaluation No. 2, *Methodological Briefs*, no. 2,

²⁸ Bandura A. (2001) Social Cognitive Theory: An Agentic Perspective *Annu. Rev. Psychol.* 2001. 52:1–26

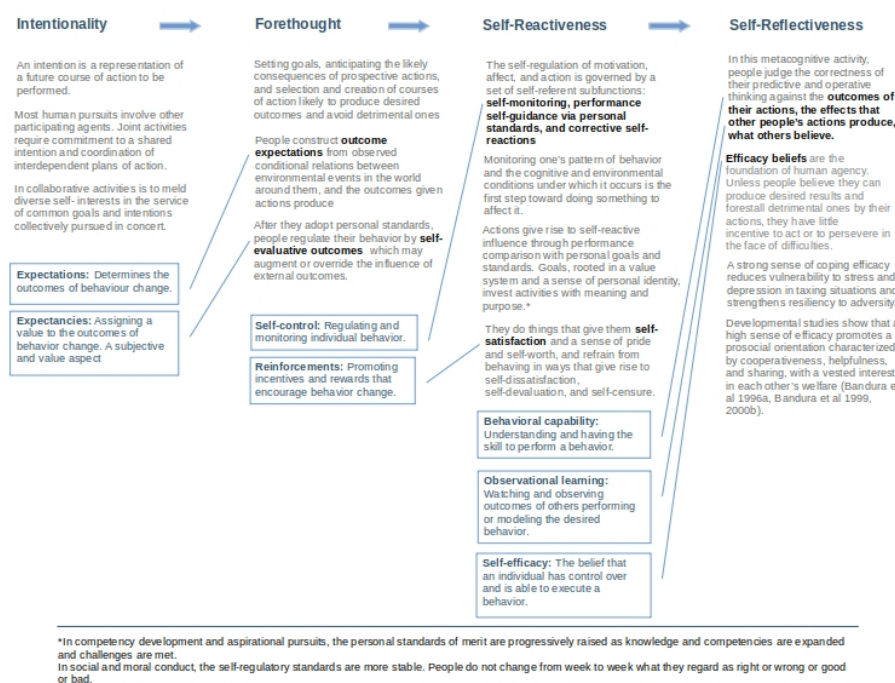


Figure 3: Core features of human agency²⁹

According to SCT, to be an agent is to intentionally make things happen by one's actions.

'To make their way successfully through a complex world full of challenges and hazards, people have to make good judgments about their capabilities. They must anticipate the probable effects of different events and courses of action, size up socio-structural opportunities and constraints and regulate their behavior accordingly. These belief systems are a working model of the world that enables people to achieve desired outcomes and avoid untoward ones.'³⁰

An intention is a representation of a future course of action to be performed. The KIs describes a high interest among the beneficiaries about the Project, which is probably a result of the experiences of the beneficiaries with the projects and programs, previously implemented, targeting the Roma population in Serbia and Hungary. Besides MRGE, and partners Idetartozunk and Praxis have been working previously in the Region and have a well established network of beneficiaries, allies and supporters, which is a reason why the Project was well accepted and raised a strong interest among the beneficiaries, that contributed to their intentionality to take part and their commitment to joining with the others to coordinate effort towards the common objectives.

Opportunity to meld self-interest and to pursue joint goals was identified as a main factor that should assure long-term impact. The baseline studies elaborated that in Hungary, the state system of free legal aid closed many offices in the country and imposed very complicated preconditions that make access of the disadvantaged people literally impossible. There is a similar situation with free legal aid in Serbia. In addition, many beneficiaries in Hungary in Serbia don't even know to which state agency they can turn in

²⁹ Adapted from: Bandura A. (2001) Social Cognitive Theory: An Agentic Perspective Annu. Rev. Psychol. 2001. 52:1–26

³⁰ Ibid

a case of discrimination or other human rights violation. According to some research, many beneficiaries are not aware that there is a law prohibiting discrimination.

However, the Project opened the opportunity for the beneficiaries to access free legal aid. One KI described changes of the experience among beneficiaries, who accepted the opportunity to have someone to turn to.

Mediators in Hungary talking about the Project's impact said that the Project has an absolutely positive effect on the beneficiaries in terms of increased self-confidence and the perception that they have someone to turn to. Information about the Project spread quickly 'like wildfire' and more and more people are eager to participate.

KI from Idetartozunk, answered the question about impact praising that the Project managed to assemble and to put in function a small network of legal specialists, so that the beneficiaries have some entity to turn to, realizing that it is possible to complain and win against local authorities.

Lawyer from Hungary, said that the impact of the Project can be seen in the fact that the beneficiaries now realise that they have somebody to assist with discrimination and equal treatment issues. She described that until 2016 existed an institution that provided free legal aid in Hungary. Today it is very complicated to access and many beneficiaries eventually give up trying.

The main operative methods in the Project is outreach in which competent mediators and lawyers approach the beneficiaries in their natural environment, working on their motivation, helping resolve doubts and misconceptions and helping clarify the expected outcomes and expectancies. Expected outcomes are linked with the experience of the beneficiaries, and expectancies relate to their subjective attitudes and values. Values showed as very important and motivating as one of the informants explain: *lawyer from Serbia explained that where he worked, he noticed a great individual interest, but he would always explain to the users that there are also broader interests, that their decision to file a complaint has an impact on the protection of the rights of other people, members of vulnerable communities.*

Outreach and empowerment helped beneficiaries to consolidate their self-control in the sense of regulating their own behavior and motivation and ability to identify various incentives to reinforce changed behavior. The reinforcements might be personal/internal like a sense of self-worth or external as favorable changes in the environment, as the consequences of the changed behavior. Importance of feeling of self-satisfaction, self-worth and dignity as important factors in human agency is implied in the explanation of *a lawyer from Hungary. She explained that the Project affected their confidence as they were offered various legal options to the beneficiaries, who were and treated with care, dignity, and respect as human beings. When treated differently, people lose their confidence, and their clients "...have received many slaps in the past."* This is valid not only for Roma but also for other disadvantaged groups in Hungary.

Another lawyer from Hungary asked about the impact of the Project and the changes it brought about to the beneficiaries - stated that the Project was a very good intervention for beneficiaries as it connected the most deprived people on one hand with highly-skilled people dedicated to their cases. Asked a

sub-question ('Has the Project increased access to justice?'), He answered positively. He thinks that the network of legal aid is well established and former clients will be able to spread the message to new ones. This indicates an environmental reinforcement in the form of a high-quality service provided, adding to the feeling of self-worth as well.

Many interviewed KIs and beneficiaries reported changes in behavior, describing them as increased self-confidence among the beneficiaries: a mediator from Hungary explained about the impact, that the Project had an effect on the confidence of the local Roma when they felt more supported. He stated that local Roma became more active about pursuing their rights because for many years nothing was really happening.

KI from Serbia, regarding the change in behavior stated that these are people who are constantly fighting for survival and who are constantly in spasms, so that sometimes he "provokes" them a little that they have to react, he encourages and encourages them. He stated that it gives results and that often the users become "harsher" towards him and his colleagues.

Lawyer from Serbia, when asked about the long-term effects of the project, stated that many users have not had the opportunity to hear or perceive anything about the fight against discrimination, and considering that this is a population that is learning and developing, the long-term effects will certainly remain.

Some KI identified successes in legal procedures and changes in the environment that became more enabling and see it as a guarantee of the long term-impact.

An informant from Praxis in Serbia stated that the most important component of the Project was its successful cases of legal aid, She gave an example about two women who didn't get employment due to indirect discrimination. CPE identified the discrimination and ordered the employer to return them to work. This case may serve as a good advocacy tool in the future, because the CPE is likely to follow its own 15 pages of guidance. The precedent would have strong influence on employment rights, particularly because the perpetrator was a public utility company in "Y", with 150,000 inhabitants. The judgment will have a strong deterrence influence throughout the city. Equal body decision is connected to the right to employment which is very important for the Roma population. The procedure lasted a long time, although it was obvious it is the discrimination case it took some time to assert good arguments for the case.

Another KI from Praxis in Serbia, he states that it is difficult to measure the spread of the effects of the project, but he believes that it is large. Two cases when two Romani women were returned to work by order of CPE because they were fired as members of a minority group, which was an obvious case of discrimination, 'A key informant' stated in the settlement "X" in the City of "Y", which is one of the largest settlements where Roma live, although the population is heterogeneous. He states that the settlement has thousands of inhabitants and that the information about returning to work had a great impact. He stated that information is being spread because Praxis has been working with activists, NGOs, mediators,

and teaching assistants for a long time. They also use social networks through which they keep in touch with numerous partners. He also stated that some Roma settlements have a special Facebook page.

KI in Serbia, believed there was significant positive impact from this project. The training of a significant number of stakeholders e.g. activists and lawyers, means they have been able to share the knowledge and raise the issue on the agenda with a greater focus on Roma, she also believes the project educated and increased capacities of people who can take it forward in their own work. Although a restriction to the impact is the number of people not willing to report and people fear victimization, at least their awareness is being raised and they are now able to know that they need to stand up against it.

Finally, the first results of the joint actions appeared confirming the behavioral capacity of the beneficiaries and their newly acquired knowledge and skills to perform a behavior. Effects of co-learning were augmented with observational learning, through watching and observing outcomes of others performing or modeling the desired behavior. The final effect is development of the self-efficacy belief, the belief that an individual has control over and is able to execute a behavior, which is a foundation for future agency, or readiness to resume responsibility for own actions, goals and overall betterment.

Developmental studies show that a high sense of efficacy promotes a prosocial orientation characterized by cooperativeness, helpfulness, and sharing, with a vested interest in each other's welfare.^{31 32 33}

Empowerment, however, didn't always go smoothly, as one of the participants of the FGD in Budapest stated the following: *people at the beginning appear very enthusiastic with the trials but when the case faces difficulties the enthusiasm is lost, and people tend to distrust and blame the lawyers.*

On a sub-question (How to support people to persist?), another FGD participant gave the solution as she had previous experiences with such issues, as a member of local CSO: *She explained that she visited many settlements sharing the information to people, and that should be done by the activists, social workers and others in order to empower and prepare people for what is coming upon.*

Unfortunately, the Project interventions didn't raise confidence in all environments, as the case from the urban settlement populated mostly by Roma population in the outskirts of city Karcag, shows the grim effect of segregation that lasts for decades and takes its toll in human suffering.

A street forum in "Z", 'IR'³⁴ said that the situation in that city area is somewhat better as now they have garbage bins and it's obvious that the streets are clean now. Still, she thinks that it is a small change and

³¹ Bandura A, Barbaranelli C, Caprara GV, Pastorelli C. 1996a. Multifaceted impact of self-efficacy beliefs on academic functioning. *Child Dev.* 67:1206–22

³² Bandura A, Barbaranelli C, Caprara GV, Pastorelli C, Regalia C. 2000b. Sociocognitive Self-Regulatory Mechanisms Governing Transgressive Behavior. *J. Pers. Soc. Psychol.* In press

³³ Bandura A, Pastorelli C, Barbaranelli C, Caprara GV. 1999. Self-efficacy pathways to childhood depression. *J. Pers. Soc. Psychol.* 76:258–69

³⁴ 'Anonymised'

is not going to change prejudices held by the majority population. She said that they do not receive many city services as everybody refuses to come when they call. She said that she personally called the police many times as they have a lot of problems with drugs and violence on the street but the police just refuse to come. 'IR' said that it is the same with the ambulance even in cases with urgent medical emergencies. She said that the main problem in the area is drug abuse. She discreetly showed me a drug dealer's house, and a young man walking along the street obviously under the influence of the opiates. "Many young people became zombies" she says and that is now the biggest problem.

Conclusions on impact

Majority of KIs asked about the long-term impact of the Project and described changes of the experience among the beneficiaries, who very well accepted the opportunity to have someone to turn to, to help them solve existential problems. The beneficiaries accepted a new opportunity and interest spread quickly. Not all decided to file a complaint, but a new awareness that there is a way and somebody to help them had a beneficial effect.

Some KIs identified successes in legal procedures and changes in the environment that became more enabling and sees it as a guarantee of the long term-impact. The evaluation showed that shared success stories had a strong deterrence influence.

Using Social cognitive theory in analysis, the findings indicate changes along the key components of self efficacy, behavioral capability, expectations, expectancies, self-control, observational learning and reinforcements, on which the indicators in this evaluation were based. Evaluation recorded changes in all modes of agency: direct personal agency, as seen through self-confidence, awareness, knowledge and skills of the beneficiaries. The beneficiaries showed readiness to meld their self-interest and to pursue common goals supported by competent lawyers and mediators using proxy agency as seen through community members acting jointly or in coordinated effort with their local representatives and trustful CSO. They also relied on collective agency exercised through socially coordinated and interdependent efforts, including relying on national networks, led by leading national CSOs who were well-connected with state agencies and could raise issues on a higher level.

Unfortunately the Project interventions didn't raise confidence in all environments, as the case from the settlement populated mostly by Roma population in the outskirts of city "Z", shows the grim effect of segregation that lasts for decades and its toll in human suffering.

Efficiency of the intervention

Efficiency OECD/DAC criteria represents a measure of how economically resources/inputs (funds, expertise, time, etc.) are converted to results. The purpose of this evaluation is to assess technical efficiency and give a brief analysis of allocative efficiency.

Optimal allocative efficiency is not achieved unless the intervention produces the highest possible level of utility or value to society. It is assessed through comparison of realized allocation of funds and alternatives.

Added value was provided by the beneficiaries accepting the Project it as their felt need, with the intervention reflecting on their beliefs, perceptions and behavior. Empowering of the beneficiaries enabled them to stand for themselves and protect their rights, alone or in cooperation with their representatives and trustees, and no longer depend on the good will, discretion and voluntarism of state officials and local authorities, or being just seen as passive recipients of the aid in their environment, as it is seen with the mainstream socio-economic improvement approach, which allocates appropriateness of the Project and its efficacy.

Project expenditure:

The total cost of the project was 249 992.66 EUR. The EU contribution is max. 199 994.13 EUR (80%) while partners must cover 20% of the total costs as defined in the Grant Agreement. The evaluation noted that all the partners fulfilled their financial obligations towards Project implementation signifying that the programme budget was sufficiently met. Allocation of the programme budget was in accordance with the stipulated milestones and deliverables to be achieved which is a good approach to budget allocation.

Based on the evaluation findings the estimation is that the Projects influenced profoundly the perception, attitudes, knowledge and skills of between 500-1000 of beneficiaries which is the primary reach of the Project. The secondary reach is estimated to be about 25000, taking into account a number of covered settlements populated mostly by Roma people, many with average population between 2-5000 inhabitants.

Secondary reach might be higher if counted in effects of legal cases on a general population.

Taking into account the secondary reach and the total costs of the Project, we estimate that the spending per beneficiary ratio is under 10 EUR, which is a reasonable cost.

Cost minimisation measures:

In the Project several cost minimisation measures were applied:

- MRGE has previously been involved in the implementation of similar Roma PROJECTS in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Ukraine and Macedonia (EIDHR/2012/308-506; ENI/2016/376-039; IPA/2015/382006). Partners have decades of experiences working with discrimination and other human rights violation affecting Roma. All the previous assures skills and experiences that shorten the 'learning curve' thus reducing the financial losses on trials and errors.
- The partners established continuous monitoring, to ensure targeting efficiency.
- MRGE and partners staff, trainers etc. used economic hotels and budget airlines.
- The partners used relatively inexpensive facilities, such as civil society shared spaces, for training, conferences, etc.
- The discrimination cases were reported to the equality body as it is a procedure which is free of charge unlike court procedures.
- Partners maintained a continued communication through online platforms, leading to a cost-effective coordination.
- Finally, the partners use their local knowledge in all target countries to ensure that costs incurred e.g. translation and printing represent value for money, and that 'wastage' in spending is kept to an absolute minimum.

Conclusions on efficiency

Impact of the intervention

Regarding the technical efficiency evaluation findings, partners fulfilled all the financial obligations to the Project and took diligent care about Projects expenditures, cost minimisation measures and the soundness of the overall financial management and accountability system instituted for the Project.

The REILA Project is an integral part of decades of MRG work with the Roma population in Europe. Matching funds to this REILA project included education of elementary school students about discrimination. KIs requested – and this evaluation's recommendations include – further spreading of these ideas on equality. One KI from Serbia referred to an activity complementary to the existing curriculum (itself developed initially for the education of lawyers, CSO activists and mediators on

anti-discrimination legislation and legal remedies). She said that the training course had been successfully adapted for work with primary school children in two schools as follows:

“...The children were willing and happy, they liked and understood the topic. The framework was flexible and the children’s views were really interesting.... One got the impression that not everything is black and white, and this encouraged great interest and willingness among the children to present and defend different positions and points of view.”

She thinks it would be good to expand this work with more schools. This would gain more contacts with school administrations and create more impact. She believes that the training course on anti-discrimination legislation and legal remedies could be used in future negotiations and strive for such programs to enter the official educational system and school curriculum.

Lessons Learned

The following activities and aspects of the Project’s design proved as exceptionally valuable and transferable to other project/program settings.

Particular strengths of the project were: good context analysis; gap analysis of the protection of Roma human and minority rights; an evidence-based approach applied from the very beginning; and an ‘evaluative learning approach’ knotted into the Project’s design. The Project encompassed baseline studies for each country, and one comparative report, all containing research findings on the state of discrimination and access to justice for Roma population in Serbia and Hungary.

The Project activities complement similar projects and programmes implemented in the Region and its added value is an empowerment approach towards primary beneficiaries who are able to participate and contribute to defending their rights, and no longer depend on the good will, discretion and voluntarism of the state officials and local authorities.

The concept of the training methodology in the Project is determined as action-oriented and participatory with partners designing the training materials according to the needs of the different target groups (legal practitioners, CSOs, Roma mediators and activists). It is learner-centred (i.e. geared to meet actual gaps in the participants’ knowledge and motivation, and flexible to different learner needs); dialogue oriented (encouraging participants to ask questions, especially concerning the driving forces behind structural discrimination, and facilitating dialogue and sharing between participants).

The project activities were locally owned as the national partners played the most important roles and were recognised as the main bearers of the activities in their countries. National partners assured

participation of other local activists and CSOs forming the national network, assuring regular contact with the beneficiaries throughout the countries.

Empowering cooperation among the partners in the Project was transferred to the communities and primary beneficiaries influencing their perception, beliefs and motivation, skills and competencies so as to take greater control of their own lives and to also contribute to inclusive local development.

The emphasis on outreach greatly contributed to knowledge skills, perception and motivation of the beneficiaries. It supported the beneficiaries along the long and complex road from the position of passive recipient of aid to active agent of his/her own wellbeing.

IV. Recommendations

It is recommended that REILA, and future variations of MRGE work with Roma populations, be:

1. replicated and extended as funds allow.
2. built on explicit recognition of anti-Roma prejudice which needs to be challenged and remedied.
3. further oriented to its relatively successful legal aid, legal awareness (further considering discreet legal areas such as schooling) and training elements (especially role-plays) in rural settings.
4. extended, with more intensive, information exchange and cooperation between Roma communities, the local Roma government, social welfare centers, and local authorities. Government entities with both the power to provide support and the willingness to do so should be identified as allies and viable partners. Trust between these partners and Roma communities should be a primary goal. All parties should raise awareness of the Roma's plight.
5. directly working with beneficiaries as early as possible, including on context analysis and needs gap identification (this may strengthen later use of participatory methods and stronger consolidation of the Projects positive results).
6. adequately resourced; extended in the numbers of mediators (currently 3 which may have been doubled to 6 for an extended project area), with a comparator study done to help inform possible improved terms and conditions for mediators. This would build on the project's successful outreach work in which mediator work is crucial for learning, motivation and behavioral change. Similarly, reflection might usefully be made on remaining competitive in recruiting quality evaluators by ensuring competitive evaluation fees.
7. focused on further Roma participation and ownership of the project.

8. continuing to use blended learning and methodology– based on successful practice - increasing live (in person) training, especially for Roma communities and CSOs, which was strongly requested in questionnaire answers. Care should be taken to keep training language simple and inclusive and as far as possible ensure supporting documents are available offline. One particular example of increasing face-to-face contact is that attempts should be made, post-pandemic, to organize face-to-face meetings in Brussels, where the EU has potential to encourage national level advocacy, where advocacy systems currently lack good governance or are barely functional. Online methodologies may be more suitable pursued for lawyers having pressures on time but good internet connection.
9. using communication with communities as its starting point for advocacy.
10. mapping social media practices and preferences of Roma communities. The relative weight (in labor, time and expense) of written baseline reports might usefully be shifted to more popular media which can engage with both communities and other stakeholders. One example may be for engaging Roma in the social media graphics and messages for campaigns, with prizes for images used. One example of content may be the exclusion of Roma from football in Hungary, which might be taken up as a particular social media focus. This whole process builds on the significant success already achieved in some communities, to provide inspiration for the whole Project.

V. Annexes

Annex I - Work Plan

Work Plan and Schedule of Activities

Key deliverables

- 1 Evaluation work plan /inception report. Delivered latest 15 September 2022
- 2 Preliminary findings (max. 3 pages) at mid-term of the evaluation period. Delivered 31 September 2022
- 3 Final evaluation report (max. ? pages excluding annexes) Delivered 31 October 2022

[illegible]

[illegible]

Annex II - Evaluation Matrix

Objectives (lifted from the call for proposals)	Key questions	Types of data	Instruments/methods	Outcomes
Assess the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability and impact of the project in relation to the objectives and supporting outputs set out in 'Roma Equality through Increased Legal Access (REILA)' Programme Document and furthermore, provide MRGE with an opportunity for 'structured evaluative learning', with the aim of learning from the programme design and implementation processes.	To what extent has MRG interventions been relevant in addressing the needs of the affected people, including how the needs were identified, prioritized and if there were unmet needs in the project period.	Quantitative and qualitative	Questionnaire, KII	An overview of the activities implemented (against MRGE project objectives) including gaps and areas of unmet needs from both sectoral and cross-cutting perspectives.
	To what extent were the objectives achieved in the project? What were the major factors influencing the achievement or non- achievement of the objectives or activities?	Quantitative and qualitative	Questionnaire, KII	Key achievements and factors influenced the achievement or non-achievement of the objectives or activities are identified.
	To what extent were 'structured evaluative learning' integrated in the project activities?	Qualitative	Questionnaire, KII	Specific evaluative learning activities identified and impacts to the target populations.
Based on the findings of the evaluation, develop a set of suggestions and key recommendations for future and continued MRGE and its partners activities.	What were the key learnings from the project? What were the major factors, including coordination, capacity, communication, partnership, which influenced the achievement or non- achievement of implementation?	Qualitative	KII, FGDs	Key learning including good practices and stakeholders' reflection on Accountability to Affected Population (AAP), capacity, coordination, from the Project are identified.
To report to the EU and other funders on the usage of their resources in the project.	Were activities cost-efficient? Were objectives achieved on time? Was the Project implemented in the most efficient way compared to alternatives?	Quantitative and qualitative	Questionnaire, KII, (FGDs)	Cost, timeliness and capacity efficiency of the response are assessed.

Annex IV - Questionnaire

Questions for Partners and Allies:

NB: There is no need for deep thinking and long answers. This questionnaire is designed to take only 11 minutes of your time to answer and send.

1. IDENTITY / CONTACTS:

1.A Name:

1.B Were you/your organization part of Project 'Roma Equality through Increased Legal Access'? YES / NO

If yes, was your organization a partner of MRGE or how else were you involved?

1.C In which country / countries were you a Partner / Ally /Other in this Project (please specify)

1.D Are you: (tick-box) Male / Female / Prefer not to say

If you don't identify as Male or Female, please specify

1.E Please specify, if you identify as a member of Minority.....

1.F Nationality

1.G E-mail address:

1.H Telephone (with country code written as eg +36 or +381)

2. Which part of the Project worked best? Please specify.....

3. Overall, in my opinion, project interventions:

3.A "Had a direct, positive impact"

Absolutely (97%-100%); Strongly (80%-96%); Mostly (60-79%); Average (40-59%); Partly (20-39%); Weakly (4%-19%); Absolutely Not (0-3%):

3.B *"Helped secure the rights of its beneficiaries"*

3. C *"Responded to the needs and priorities of its beneficiaries"*

3.D *"Will have sustainable outcomes / benefits"*

4. I regard MRGE as:

4.A "Open to feedback and criticism"

Absolutely (97%-100%); Strongly (80%-96%); Mostly (60-79%); Average (40-59%); Partly (20-39%); Weakly (4%-19%); Absolutely Not (0-3%):

4.B "Expert"

4.C "Actively seeking equality with its partners in steering change in line with communities needs and priorities?"

4.D Able to accept when communities, partners and allies refuse MRGE's advice and take a different approach?

4.E Actively working with partners and allies to assess gaps in their capacity to influence change?

4.F Actively supporting women within minority communities to develop their skills and abilities to ensure that issues are taken up with their communities and by MRGE?

4.G Actively reducing or eliminating participation barriers (including disabilities, age, statelessness, rural/urban) for potential and actual minority activists.

If your previous answer is not 'Absolutely', how can MRGE actively reduce or eliminate participation barriers?

5. Is it MRGE's role to strengthen coordination and cooperation? YES/NO

If so, how can MRGE encourage partners and allies at local and regional level to work together? (please specify)

6. What impact (quality and quantity) was made in strengthening the Minority Rights of affected people? (specific examples are very welcome)

7. Were activities cost-efficient / on time / implemented in the most efficient way compared to alternatives?(please specify)

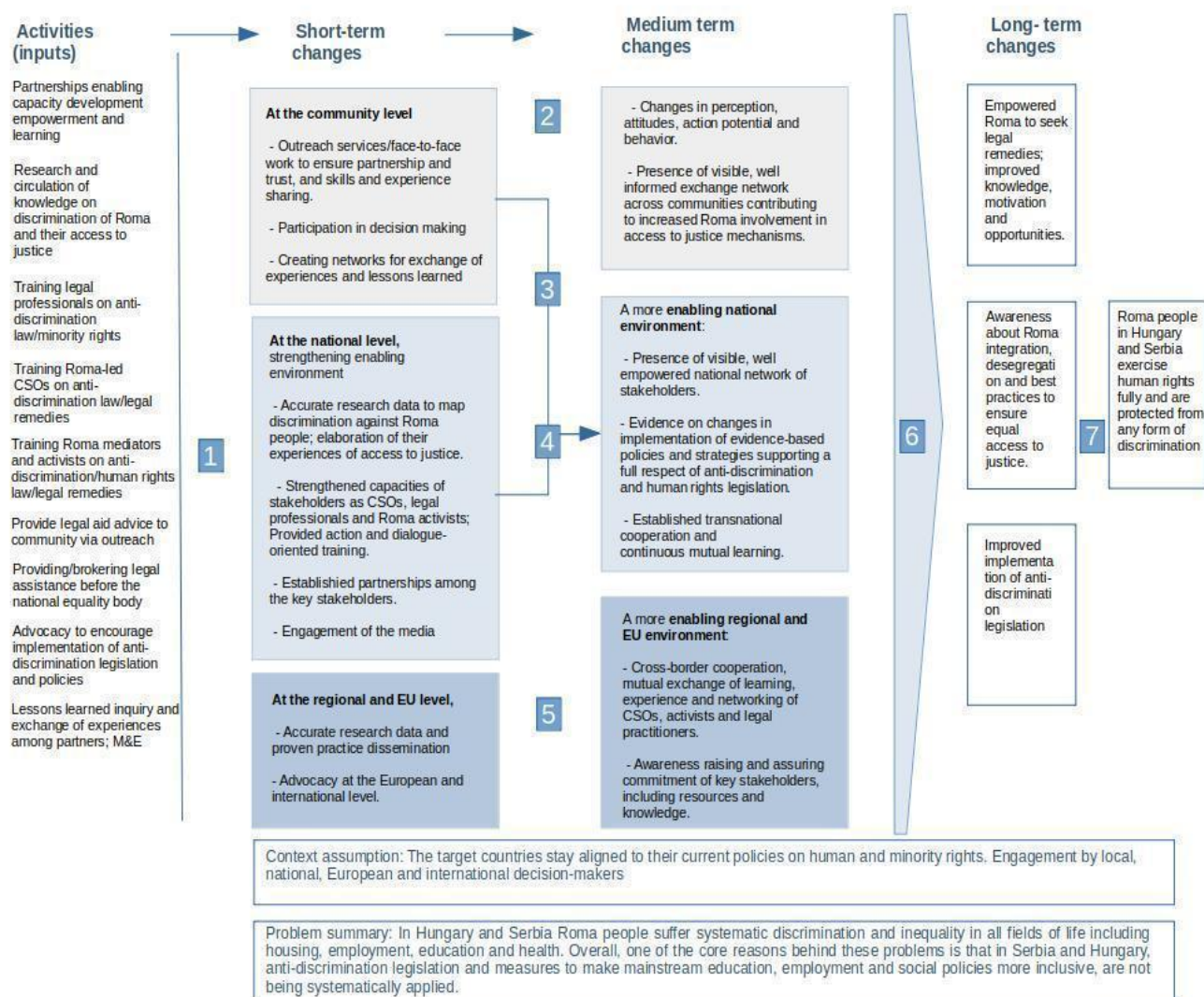
8. What are the Key Learnings from this Project of its implementation? Please specify... ..

9. Which one thing should MRGE start or improve? Why?

10. This is the most important question. What message do you have for MRGE about the 'Roma Equality through Increased Legal Access Project? (Please write as much as you like):

Thanks for your time and guidance!

Annex V – Theory of Change



Annex VI – Quantitative results

Quantitative Ratings

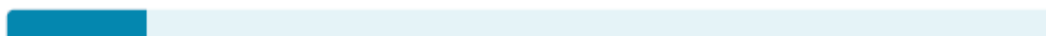
Were you/your organisation part of Project 'Roma Equality through Increased Legal Access'
 Ön/szervezete részt vett az „Roma Equality through Increased Legal Access” projektben?
 Da li ste Vi/Vaša organizacija bili deo projekta, Roma Equality through Increased Legal Access“

15 out of 17 answered

YES / IGEN / DA 13 resp. 86.7%



NO / NEM / NE 2 resp. 13.3%



Are you:

Ön:

Da li ste

17 out of 17 answered

Female / Nő / Žensko 11 resp. 64.7%



Male / Férfi / Muško 4 resp. 23.5%



Prefer not to say / Inkább nem mondja meg / Ne želite da kažete 2 resp. 11.8%



Overall, in my opinion, project interventions:

Összességében véleményem szerint az MRGE tevékenységei/nek:

Sve u svemu, po mom mišljenju, Projekat je:

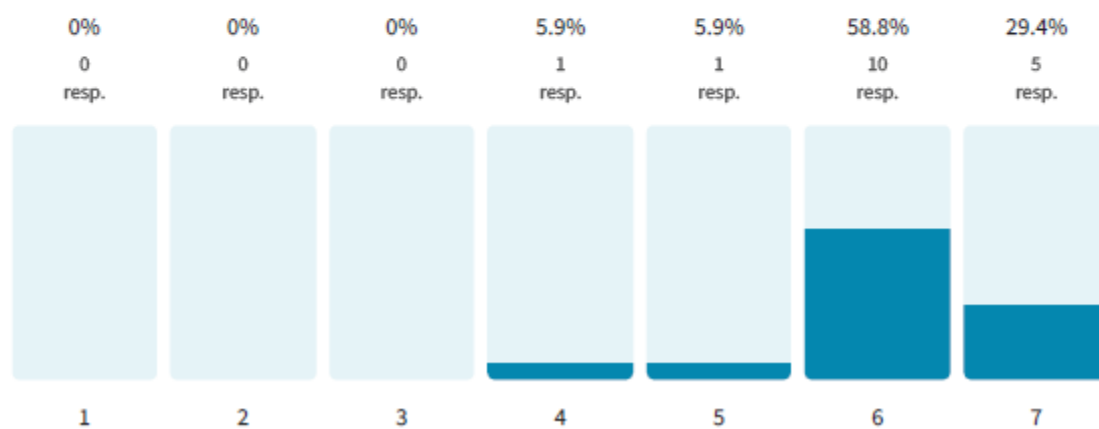
"Had a direct, positive impact"

"Közvetlen, pozitív hatása volt"

"Imao direktan, pozitivan uticaj/efekat"

17 out of 17 answered

6.1 Average rating



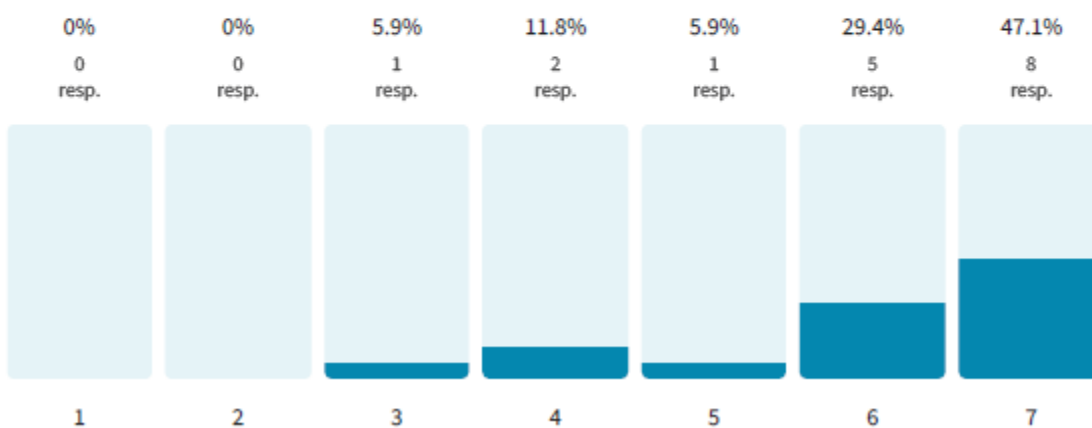
"Helped secure the rights of its beneficiaries"

"Segített romák jogainak biztosításában"

"Pomogao da se obezbede prava korisnika"

17 out of 17 answered

6.0 Average rating



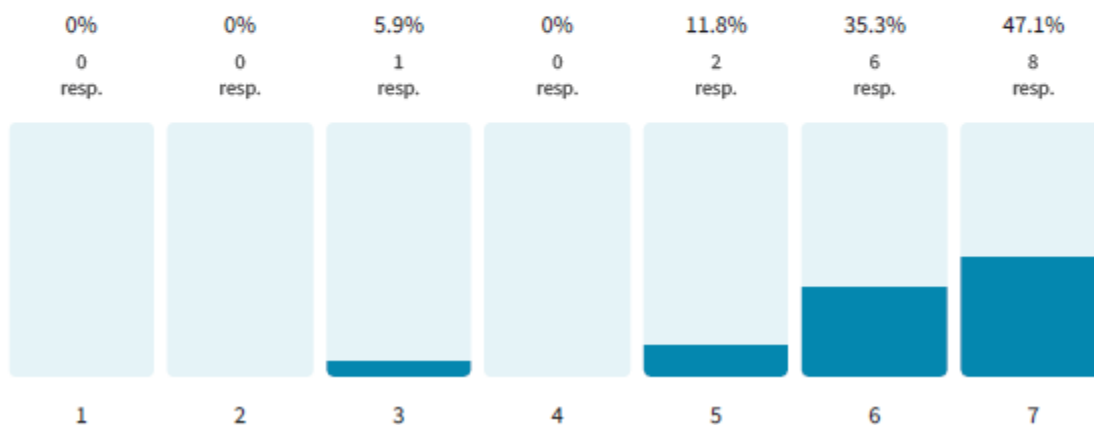
"Responded to the needs and priorities of its beneficiaries"

"Reagált a romák igényeire és prioritásaira"

"Usklađen sa potrebama i prioritetima korisnika"

17 out of 17 answered

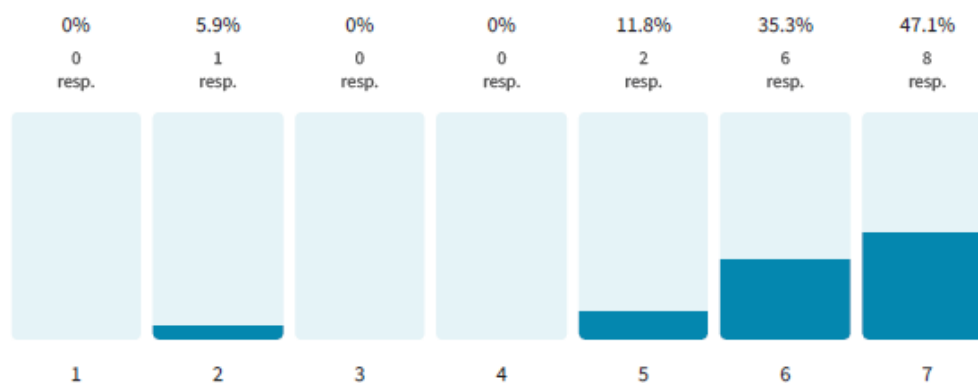
6.2 Average rating



"Will have sustainable outcomes / benefits"
 "Fenntartható eredményei/hasznai lesznek"
 "Projekat će imati održive rezultate / koristi za korisnike"

17 out of 17 answered

6.1 Average rating



I regard MRGE as:

Véleményem szerint az MRGE:

Moje mišljenje o MRGE-u je sledeće:

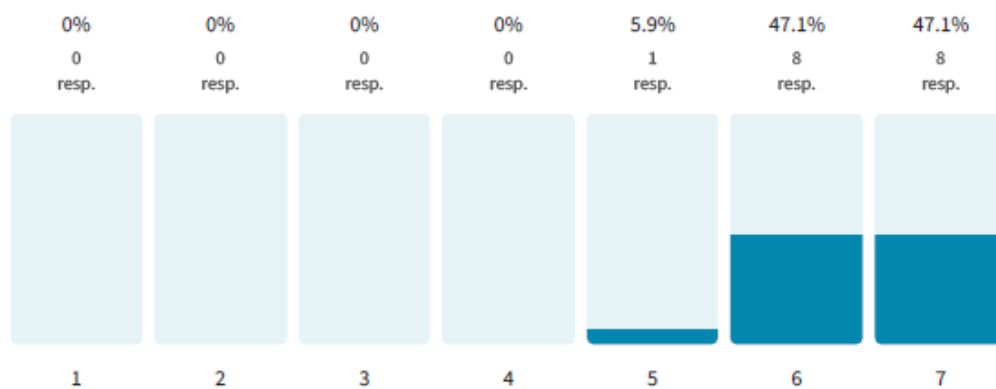
"Open to feedback and criticism"

"Nyitott a visszajelzésekre és a kritikára"

"Otvoreni su za povratnu informaciju i kritiku"

17 out of 17 answered

6.4 Average rating



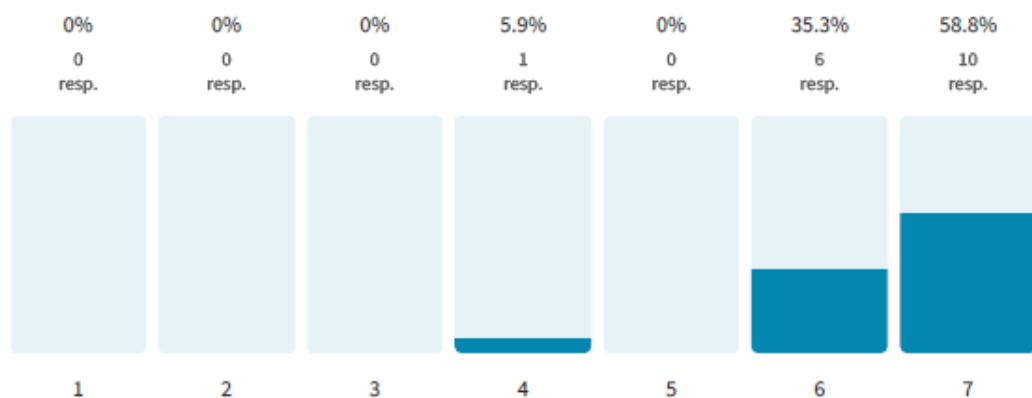
"Expert"

"Szakértő"

"Eksperiti"

17 out of 17 answered

6.5 Average rating



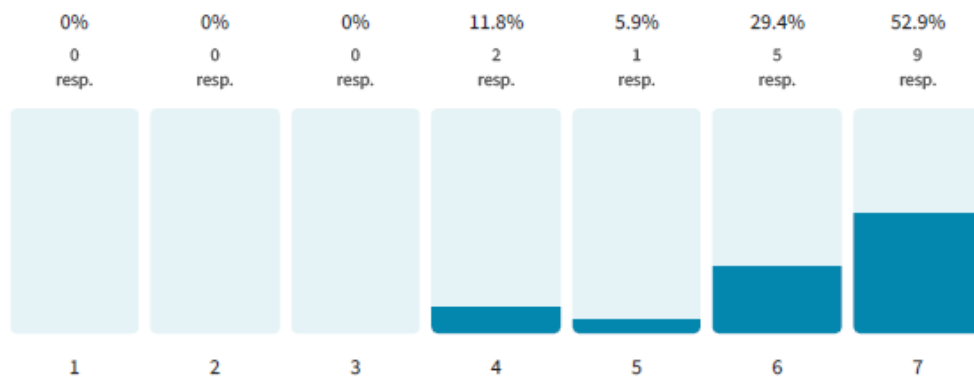
"Actively seeking equality with its partners in steering change in line with communities needs and priorities?"

"A közösségek szükségleteivel és prioritásaival összhangban aktívan törekszik az egyenlőségre partnereivel a változás irányításában"

"Aktivno grade ravnopravne odnose sa svojim partnerima u upravljanju promenama u skladu sa potrebama i prioritetima zajednice?"

17 out of 17 answered

6.2 Average rating



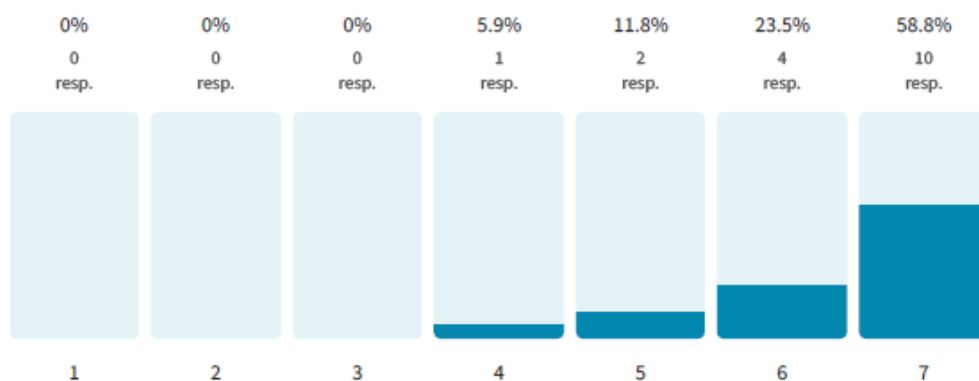
"Able to accept when communities, partners and allies refuse MRGE's advice and take a different approach?"

"Képes elfogadni, ha a közösségek, partnerek és szövetségesek nem fogadják meg az MRGE tanácsait, és más megközelítést alkalmaznak?"

"Mogu da prihvatiti kada zajednica, partneri ili saradnici odbiju njihov savet i predlože drugačiji pristup"

17 out of 17 answered

6.4 Average rating



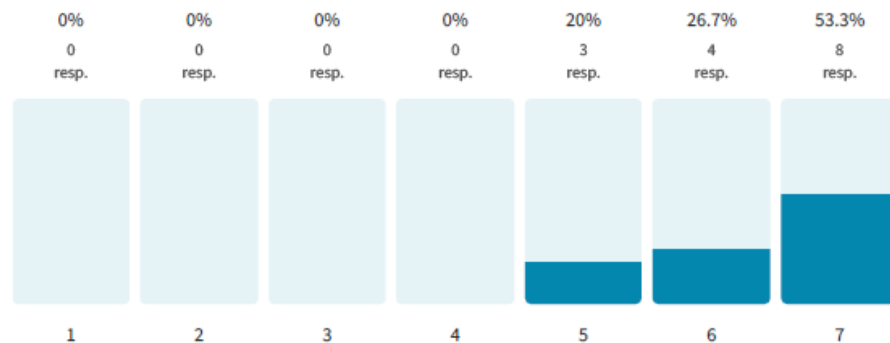
"Actively working with partners and allies to assess gaps in their capacity to influence change?"

"Aktíván együttműködik a partnerekkel és szövetségesekkel, hogy felmérje a változást befolyásoló képességeik hiányosságait?"

"Aktivno rade sa partnerima i saradnicima na proceni nedostataka u njihovom kapacitetu da utiču na promene?"

15 out of 17 answered

6.3 Average rating



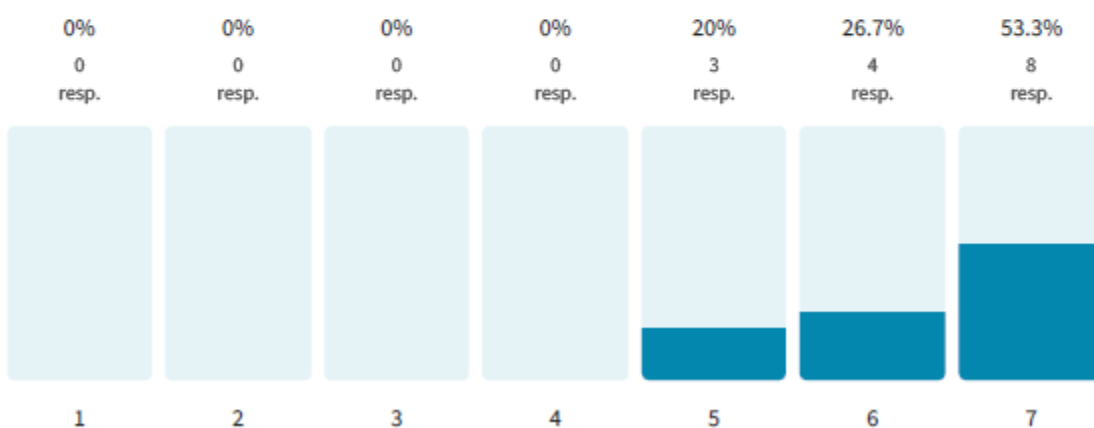
"Actively supporting women within minority communities to develop their skills and abilities to ensure that issues are taken up with their communities and by MRGE?"

"Aktívan támogatja a nőket a kisebbségi közösségekben, hogy fejlesszék készségeiket és képességeiket, annak érdekében, hogy biztosítsák, hogy a problémákkal a közösségeik és az MRGE is foglalkozzon."

"Aktívan támogatja a nőket a kisebbségi közösségekben, hogy fejlesszék készségeiket és képességeiket, hogy elérjék, hogy a problémákkal a közösségeik és az MRGE is foglalkozzon."

15 out of 17 answered

6.3 Average rating



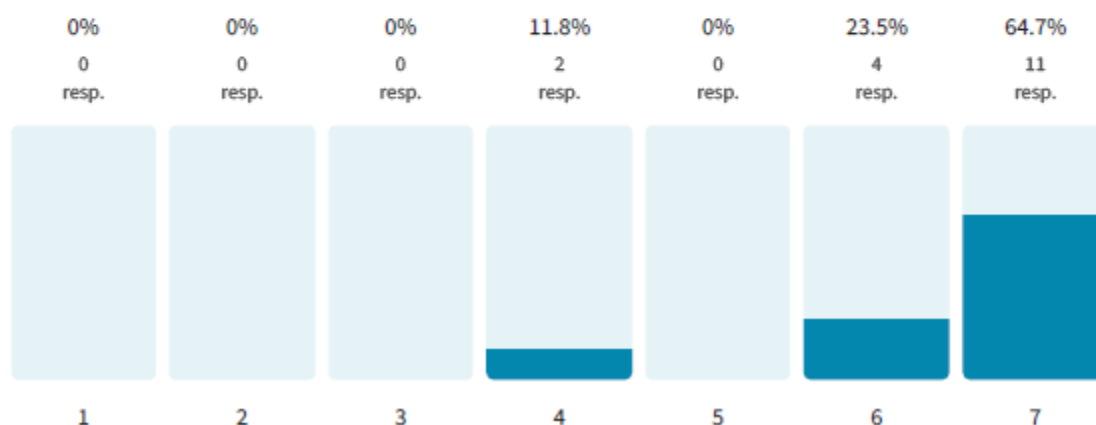
"Actively reducing or eliminating participation barriers (including disabilities, age, statelessness, rural/urban) for potential and actual minority activists."

"Aktívan csökkenti vagy megszünteti a részvételi akadályokat (pl. fogyatékoság, életkor, hontalanság, vidéki/városi lét) a potenciális és tényleges kisebbségi aktivisták számára."

Aktivno rade na smanjenju ili eliminisanju barijera, kao što su invaliditet, starost, apatridiju, ruralno/urbanostanovništvo, kod ostvarenih ili potencijalnih manjinskih aktivista."

17 out of 17 answered

6.4 Average rating



Is it MRGE's role to strengthen co-ordination and co-operation?

Az MRG feladata a koordináció és az együttműködés erősítése?

Da li je uloga MRGE-a da jača koordinaciju i saradnju?

15 out of 17 answered

YES / IGEN / DA

15 resp. 100%

NO / NEM / NE

0 resp. 0%