

ROMANI WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT IN KOSOVO

FACT SHEET 2006

BACKGROUND

Kosovo is formally part of the Union of Serbia and Montenegro, but it has been under the United Nations Interim Administration since 1999. There have been significant population changes in the last decade, and a 2003 estimate by the Statistical Office of Kosovo puts the total population at 2,000,000.¹ Due to its turbulent recent history, and the lack of a reliable census in Kosovo for over a decade, there is no readily available data segregated by ethnicity and gender.

The laws of Kosovo do not refer to the term “national minority”; instead, “communities” is used to describe inhabitants of the same ethnic, religious, or linguistic group. In addition to the lack of reliable data on the number of Roma living in Kosovo, the Roma community itself is far from cohesive, comprising people with different allegiances, linguistics, and religious traditions; overall the Roma have the most marginalized position in Kosovar society.²

In 2000, a Platform for Joint Action Regarding Kosovo Roma, Ashkalija, and Egyptian Communities was drawn up together with Kosovo Albanian leaders.³ Though this act recognizes the existence of these ethnic groups, it makes no reference to gender or the special needs of women. The Kosovo Assembly adopted the Anti-Discrimination Law in 2004, granting equal protection under the law regarding access to employment, self-employment, and occupation. A National Action Plan on the Achievement of Gender Equality in Kosovo was developed during 2002 and 2003.

The Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology has prioritized the education of non-majority communities and has established the Unit of Communities and Gender Equality. The aim of the ministry and of this unit is to create a unified education system in Kosovo, to provide inclusion in higher quality education at all levels for all people, regardless of their ethnicity, language, religion, or race.⁴

WHAT DO THE FACTS SAY?

- Education data shows that in 2002 to 2003 only 0.5 percent of those enrolled in primary schools, and only 0.03 percent of those enrolled in secondary schools, belonged to the Roma, Ashkalija, or Egyptian minority groups.⁵
- The Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology recognizes that Roma, Ashkalija, and Egyptian communities are poorly educated.⁶ In addition, representatives of Roma NGOs believe that, due to patriarchal family structures, most Romani girls and women are still discouraged from obtaining a formal education.

¹ Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, 2005. Council of Europe, http://www.coe.int/T/e/human_rights/minorities

² Second Assessment of the Situation of Ethnic Minorities in Kosovo, July-August 1999, UNHCR/OSCE, http://www.osce.org/documents/mik/1999/07/1118_en.pdf

³ Platform for Joint Action Regarding Kosovo Roma, Ashkalija and Egyptian Communities, April 2000.

⁴ Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, 2005. Council of Europe.

⁵ Statistics Office of Kosovo (SOK), Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, 2005. Council of Europe.

⁶ Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, 2005. Council of Europe.

OSI JOINT ROMANI WOMEN'S
INITIATIVE

Established in 2006 as a partnership between the NWP Roma Women's Initiative and the Roma Participation Program, OSI's Joint Romani Women's Initiative (JWRI) continues to support young Romani women's leadership, capacity building, advocacy and research..

“We cannot expect to attack poverty effectively and empower women economically if these women are suffering from poor health, inadequate schooling and skills, social exclusion, and gender-based discrimination.”

*Jennifer Tanaka, Assistant Director,
Pakiv European Roma Fund in Budapest*

WHAT IS DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN?

“Discrimination against women shall mean any distinction, exclusion, or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.”

(Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, Article 1)

WHAT DOES THE EU RACE DIRECTIVE SAY?

“In implementing the principle of equal treatment irrespective of racial or ethnic origin, the Community should, in accordance with Article 3(2) of the EC Treaty, aim to eliminate inequalities, and to promote equality between men and women, especially since women are often the victims of multiple discrimination.”

(Council Directive 2000/43/EC of June 29, 2000 implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons irrespective of racial or ethnic origin, Preamble 14)

- According to government statistics, the unemployment rate in Kosovo stands around 80 percent. The Kosovo Gender Analysis prepared in 2004 states that almost 70 percent of women were unemployed in 2002, and in both urban and rural areas, the female unemployment rate is about twice that for their male counterparts.⁷ This would indicate that, due to their multiple disadvantages, Romani women are greatly affected by the extremely high unemployment rate.

WHAT DO THE EXPERTS SAY?

- Existing efforts to address equal opportunities in employment focus on the Albanian and Serb communities in Kosovo, ignoring the needs of other communities. Research on women focuses mostly on Kosovar Albanian women, thus little is known about Romani women in Kosovo.⁸
- The wars of the 1990s led Kosovars to create parallel social structures, which did not prioritize the emancipation of women. Thus, at the end of the 1990s, than 3 percent of women were employed. During this time period women and their issues almost completely disappeared from public life in Kosovo.⁹
- Most Romani women have unregistered jobs with below average wages, such as cleaning in private businesses and homes, or taking care of children and the elderly.
- Romani women comprise an extremely vulnerable group and are an easy target for trafficking and forced prostitution.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE?

- The government should establish a data collection method segregated by ethnicity and gender, according to the international standard, to address the exclusion of Romani women from the social and economic system and to introduce measures to integrate them into the labor market.
- European institutions (European Union, Council of Europe) should ensure that funds and institutional support for improving economic conditions in Kosovo address the equality of Romani women.
- Provide financial and technical support for improving the employability of Romani women.
- Increasing employment opportunities for Romani women should be a priority for mainstream policies that deal with poverty and employment.

MORE INFO:

<http://cps.ceu.hu/>

<http://www.romawomensinitiatives.org>

www.soros.org/initiatives/women

⁷ Kosovo Gender Analysis 2004, SIDA, 6.

http://www.womenwarpeace.org/kosovo/docs/kosovogenderanalysis_sida.pdf

⁸ Kosovo Gender Analysis 2004, SIDA, 3.

⁹ Kosovo Gender Analysis 2004, SIDA, 4.