
Lynette
ŠIKIĆ-MIĆANOVIĆ

ROMANI WOMEN
AND THEIR LIVING
CONDITIONS

The Roma population has been described as “a people on the brink” whose lifestyle differs considerably from their surrounding cultural and social environment. Since they often live at the fringes of society in economically deprived and socially isolated settlements, it is likely that their vulnerability will be even greater than the rest of the population. Studies have consistently shown that the Roma are over-represented in all categories in need of social protection: the very poor, the long-term unemployed, the unskilled, the uneducated, members of large families, individuals without residence permits/citizenship, etc. One of the aims of this study is to analyse gender differences in the living conditions and to understand the nature and causes of these differences. Romani women often suffer *triple* discrimination: **for being poor, for being Romani and for being women**. Early marriage, multiple child-birth, and their central role in domestic work and child-care as well as reproducing traditional Romani cultural norms often prematurely determines the fate of many Romani women. Consequently, Romani women have inferior access to different forms of capital¹ that in turn determines their marginalised position.

While the Roma share origins, history and a common culture, they are not a homogeneous group. Frequently, they are falsely perceived as a group rather than many little groups. In other words, Roma communities are indisputably diverse and this diversity applies to the experiences of Romani women too. Bitu (1999: 6) attributes this diversity to Romani women’s varied experiences as members of different groups:

The whole debate is complicated by the fact that the experience of Romani women can differ substantially, according to which Roma group they belong to, which country (the specificities of the culture of the majority population) and which social conditions they live in (nomadic/settled, urban or rural area, social group, etc.),

and/or which religion they follow (Roma can be Catholic, Orthodox Christians or Muslims).

Accordingly, it is not my intention in this paper to generalise and presume that the role of women and their gendered experiences in all Romani communities are identical as these communities are very diverse.

Romani women

In any case, Romani women are in a particularly difficult position as they are at the intersection of traditional culture and modernity. It has been reported that Romani women are often excluded from educational opportunities, either through outright social discrimination or because traditional Romani values provide other priorities for Romani girls (Report on Romani Women from Central and Eastern Europe 2002). Studies have shown that Romani women bear a lot of responsibility for the preservation of a Romani culture and identity, both as women and as child bearers (see Fonseca, 1995; Pomykala & Holt, 2002). Being a mother is regarded as a woman's single most important task; if she is childless she is not considered to be an adult female. Along with this strong family orientation comes the appreciation of a large number of children in the family, because the more children the family has, the happier it is. Children are considered to be signs of prestige and good luck. According to the Refugee Women's Resource Report (2002), women are expected to be virgins when they marry and to be faithful to their husband until death. School education for girls is often restricted as a way of controlling female sexuality and soon after the onset of puberty; Romani girls are often married to prevent sexual experimentation. Romani girls and women have little power, little control over their sexual or married life, the number of children they have and the time between births. Any attempt made by Romani women to change such a role (e.g., higher levels of education, formal employment, contraception) can sometimes be seen as "giving away" the Romani identity. Some foresee the complete disappearance of the Roma culture if their women are going to live like all other women.

Research with Romani women

Research for this study included interviews with 20 women and fieldwork in five different counties.² It also draws on the results of the national survey that included 968 households in Romani settlements throughout Croatia. Although

women were willing to participate, my access to them had been occasionally impeded by Roma males. Moreover, it was almost impossible to conduct a “private” interview without the presence of other women and children who frequently walked in and out of each other’s houses and participated in the discussion.

Prior to discussing Romani women’s living conditions, the following section briefly outlines their backgrounds, gender roles and fieldwork observations. Analysis of the research interviews shows that early marriage and/or social responsibilities (childcare and domestic duties) contribute to the high levels of illiteracy among Romani girls and women. Interviews with Romani women indicated that their age of “marriage” ranged between 12 and 21 (the average age was 16.5). However, only six of these women are officially married, the rest are in de facto relationships in which they use their own surnames which they subsequently pass onto their children. In accordance with virilocal patterns of residence, only 6 women now live in their places of birth compared to 14 who moved to their “husband’s”. As expected, they had their first-born as early as 12 and only two women were as “old” as 21 when they had their first child (the average age was 17.5).³ Most of the women (12) in this sample had three or four children while one even had six children.⁴ Three women did not have any children at all (one was pregnant, and the other two were planning to have children). It was easy to mistake girls (who often look much older) for grown women. In most cases, they were children themselves, in every respect, when they started to have children.

Quite alarmingly, their levels of education are extremely low: Nine women had no schooling at all; seven women had only attended 1-4 grades of primary school; three did not manage to finish primary school and only two finished high school. This became clearly evident during our interviews because many had difficulty recalling years and the ages of their children. Some admitted that they only knew how to sign their names and produced their ID cards and certificates of citizenship, etc. as soon as I started to ask questions. Many could not even understand or reply to my questions without a translator/interpreter. Most explained (13) that they did not go to school or stopped going to school early because they had to look after siblings while their own mothers worked or that they had to work themselves (e.g., begging, collecting herbs). These social responsibilities mean that many girls were deprived of education; this reflects a strong patriarchal culture of Roma commu-

nities and expectations of female children to work rather than attend school. Many girls accept this inequality and justify this by saying that they had no desire to go to school anyway or that they had had enough after a few grades. Contrastingly, one particular woman, aged 30 with 4 children told me that she desperately wanted to go to school and that she successfully finished secondary school (with the help of the school) even though both her parents were alcoholics who sold her for a crate of beer to her husband's parents when she was 15.

Discussions with these women revealed that gender roles in these communities are dominated by patriarchal norms such that the roles of women and men are clearly divided: they are still expected to fulfil traditional functions such as domestic work and childcare even though they substantially contribute to the household budget. Thus, Romani women, regardless of what their husbands do are ultimately charged with supporting and feeding their children. They are deeply resistant to being separated from their children under any circumstances. For this reason, they rarely leave their home spaces and why they prefer the irregular nature of work in the grey economy. They often engage in seasonal farm work, collecting herbs and scrap metal, but only Romani women and children beg – for whom begging is not generally felt to be shameful (as it would be for men).

Women in many ways resemble indentured servants, with no place of their own, who rarely go out or leave the home area. Hardly anyone and certainly not any of the women I spoke to, considered it remotely unfair that they did most of the work. Only 1.5% of the national sample participants agreed that the large workloads of women (work, family obligations) were the main problem of the household. This inability to recognise discriminatory practices, on the one hand, reflects the strength of patriarchal norms in these communities but also point to how they regard this as insignificant compared to more pressing problems. Accordingly, most participants (64%) claimed that the poor economic circumstances (shortage, poverty) were the main problem of the household. Clearly, this shows that they are more concerned about survival problems caused by common causes (poverty, discrimination), which then does not leave much space for “separate” problems like gender issues.⁵

Typically, the most presentable or more substantial homes that make an impression are usually at the front or centre of a Roma settlement (e.g., Kuršanec and Piškovec in the County of Međimurje) and conveniently con-



ceal the real slums at the rear.⁶ Purposely, I usually headed for the areas that disintegrated into squalor but nevertheless spaces that were constantly churned by children. Surprisingly, the interiors of the households I visited were relatively tidy (considering the number of people who all lived together in these cramped spaces and the rivers of mud outside). Nonetheless, outside these living spaces, the setting beyond the front door was invariably a dump with piles of rubbish, broken furniture and fixtures, as well as huge mounds of metal scraps.

Pregnant, aged 15,
no schooling...

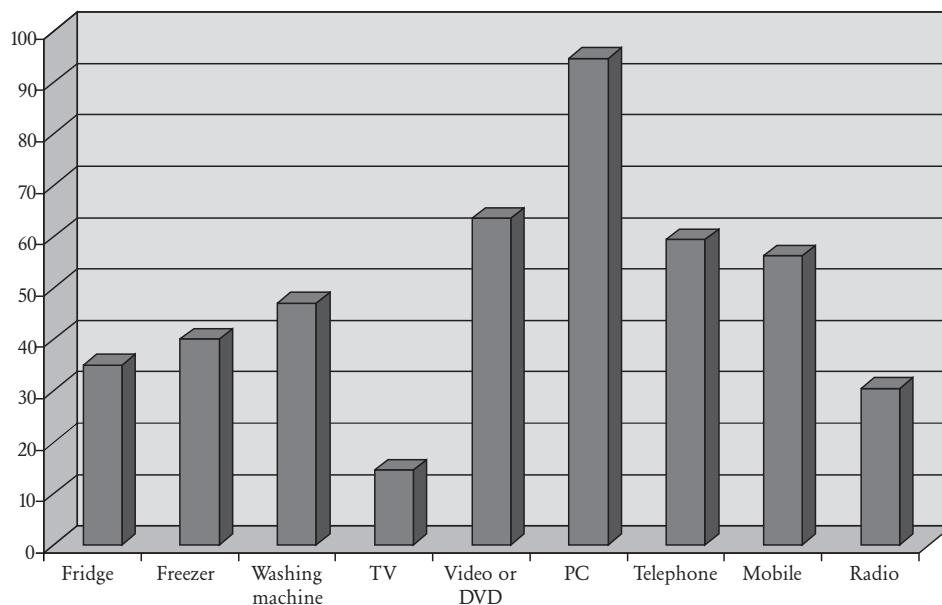
Romani women and their living conditions

A basic premise of this paper is that living conditions are multi dimensional. This means that the situation that individuals (specifically women) and households experience have to be seen as consisting of several factors simultaneously. These factors include housing, education, access to infrastructure, income, social support, rights, etc. They all make up a complex picture and can be accessed by using measures of well-being. Living conditions can considerably affect the ways in which Romani women are able to care for their families and themselves.

Measures of Well-being⁷

1) The possession of common types of appliances and electrical goods within a household is an important measure of well-being (e.g., fridges, TV, washing machines, dishwashers, telephone, computers, etc.). Noticeably, Romani households in most cases do not have a “full set of consumer durables” that would undoubtedly alleviate the burdens of domestic duties for women. Many households lack “ordinary” household items such as washing machines (47%), fridges (35%), and freezers (40%) that would considerably ease women’s domestic work that often entails washing and feeding large households.⁸ In addition, most households do not have computers (94.7%) and (mobile) phones (56.2% & 59.4%), which reflects their lack of (computer) literacy skills and contributes to their isolation.

Diagram 1
The percentage of households that do not have appliances and electrical goods N=968



Source: Field study 2004

2) Household conditions are also an important measure of well-being and a safe and comfortable house is a basic condition for any family life (McLoyd and Wilson, 1991). Results indicate that most of the national sample participants live in houses (74.5%) and that their homes are mostly made out of brick, stone, or concrete blocks (85.7%). At a glance, these statistics appear optimistic but it should be noted that they can be very misleading. Many of the “houses” I saw are in substantial disrepair and provide impoverished substandard accommodation to the



Durdevac – Stiska

Romani population. While not completely unfit for habitation, many have broken windows, leaking/unsatisfactory roofs, structural instability (visual external evidence of structural movement – fractures/bulges within the external walls), dampness, pests (i.e., rats, cockroaches), lack of adequate heating/lighting, lack of ventilation, and no plumbing or running water that make family life very difficult. Nearly half of the national sample participants (49.1%) are dissatisfied with the dampness and the run-down condition of their homes.

Over crowdedness is another perpetual problem; in almost half the national sample households (45%), family members do not have their own beds. Moreover, 21.6% of the households in the national sample do not have more than one living space, which means that all the activities of the household (i.e., cooking, eating, bathing, sleeping, homework, leisure activities, etc.) are most probably all carried out in the one room. This undoubtedly disrupts and complicates most of what women are required to do as “wives” and mothers. Results also indicate that national sample participants are also dissatisfied with the size of their living spaces (53.6%) as well the arrangement (49%).

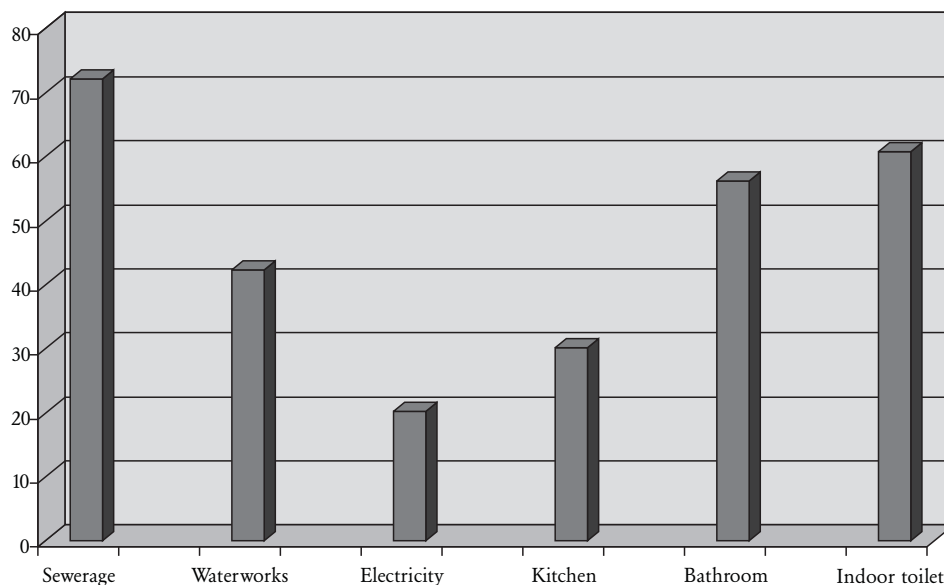
Results indicate that sanitation services, running water and electricity do not extend to quite a number of Romani neighbourhoods/households (see Diagram 2).



Sveti Đurd, home for six

Clearly, lack of access to public services and utilities is a significant problem in many Roma neighbourhoods. Moreover, the Roma themselves see this as a problem; 62.9% of the national sample participants are dissatisfied with the absence of water, gas and electricity in their settlements. Besides these deficiencies, in 30% of all households women do not have kitchens (including a sink with running hot and cold water) where they can prepare and cook food for their families. A large number of households do not have bathrooms (56.1%) with a satisfactory supply of hot and cold water which mostly disadvantages women who are solely responsible for washing their children.¹⁰ 60.7% of households do not have indoor toilets while 17.5% of households have no toilet facilities (indoor or outdoor) whatsoever.

Beyond doubt, all of these disadvantages (especially if their cumulative effects are taken into account) influence the health and safety of all household members which is unavoidably linked to Romani women. The household is often the locus of Romani women's employment, childcare and social interaction and all the activities that take place in the household are her responsibility (e.g., she is solely accountable for making sure that her children are clean, fed, rested, and have done their homework, etc.). Sherman (1994) has noted that overcrowding, utility



Source: Field study 2004

Diagram 2
Lack of facilities in the household (%) N=968

shutoffs, inadequate heating and other housing quality problems may disrupt children's ability to rest or do homework and may also contribute to stress and depression in adults. Undoubtedly, the Roma endure more extreme hardships as a result of their poor living conditions which inevitably cause more anxiety and despair among this population. For example, a family (with three children all under the age of five with another child on the way) in Sveti Đurđ (no electricity, sanitation services, etc.) described to me the terrifying fear of sleeping at night in the dark because rats run rampant and bite their children. Another woman that lives in Capraške Poljane explained to me that she has to sleep with the lights on because her home is infested with cockroaches. During fieldwork, it also became evident that many children do not have suitable conditions (tables/desks, lighting, peace and quiet) for learning in the home environment. Consequently, addressing a problem behaviour at school e.g., sleepy, inattentive children with soiled clothes may be futile without addressing the multiple poverty factors in family environments (e.g., no bed, no washing facilities and lack of paved roads) that are contributing and maintaining the problem behaviour. Thus, low achievement among Romani children needs to be linked to their home environment, problems of overcrowding, lack of furniture, and suitable lighting. Clearly, adequate housing conditions are indispensable to ensure the well-being of all household members.

Clearly, poor housing conditions are one of the major manifestations of poverty but environmental problems also exacerbate poverty. Since “better” locations are unaffordable, Romani settlements are often in highly polluted, unsafe areas adjacent to railway lines, rubbish tips or in the middle of industrial zones that are unattractive to others. Even though many depend on these areas for their livelihood,¹¹ 63.3% of the national sample participants said that their lives were threatened by the polluted environment and 58.1% claimed that they are dissatisfied with this. Although there is less fear of eviction among the Roma who live in these marginal areas, they (including children) are often at greater risk (e.g., accidents on railway tracks and at rubbish tips).¹² Unsurprisingly, these areas are often pest infested (e.g., Capraške Poljane, Sveti Đurđ, Đurđevac – Stiska) or swamps (e.g., Lončarevo) and do not make it feasible for women to grow home grown vegetables and fruits for their families that would in turn greatly improve their families’ otherwise poor diets. Many women told me that they cannot afford to buy fruits for their families and that they live on cheaper foods such as potatoes and beans. Home-grown produce would place fewer burdens on the household budget and make it easier to feed so many children that appear to show signs of malnourishment. In any case, communal neighbourhood

Đurđevac – Stiska



space that is often cramped with no dividing boundary markers is unusable for gardening because it is most often cluttered with abandoned pieces of furniture, appliances, and scrap metal.

3) Neighbourhood and community conditions are also important aspects of well-being. These include: (access to and quality of schools, access to medical services, and other local public services; neighbourhood quality – threat of crime, traffic problems, neighbour relations, police and fire protection). Over half of the national sample participants (51.9%) indicated that they were dissatisfied with the lack of facilities in their settlements (i.e., shops, schools, etc.). In addition, many claimed that living conditions are poor for children (62.4%), as well as for women (54.7%) and the elderly (60.1%). Consistently in all counties, the national sample participants indicated that the following (listed in order of importance) would improve the well-being of life in their neighbourhoods: school and kindergarten; health clinic, chemist's; shops; sport-recreational facilities, etc.¹³ Educational and health facilities are needed in Romani communities and these suggestions may hint at their poor educational and health status.¹⁴ Inevitably, an absence of these facilities also points to a distinct lack of accessible positive role models who might encourage a higher quality of life among the Roma. For the Roma, the effects of inadequate healthcare and education often impact disproportionately on women who frequently bear principal responsibility for family healthcare and education. Romani women also often provide the point of contact between Romani communities and public health services as well as educational institutions. By improving access to healthcare/education for Romani women this would in turn improve the health/education and overall welfare of entire Romani communities. With regard to neighbourhood quality, many women also expressed to me that they often feared for their children's safety as there are "no traffic-free" areas or playgrounds for children in their neighbourhoods. Despair, as a result of isolation was often voiced by women (e.g., medical services are reluctant to respond to emergency calls from Piškorovec because the journey along the long unpaved, potholed road leading to this Romani settlement is too time consuming and expensive in terms of ambulance repairs). Paradoxically, although Romani communities are far from ideal and neighbourhood and community conditions at some locations seriously affect their well-being, as many as 77.4% of the national sample participants do not intend to move away in the near future.

4) Making ends meet is a central challenge to well-being since financial instability is a direct source of stress.¹⁵ Only 17.6% of the national sample participants stated that employment in the formal economy provided the main sources of income in the household while over 50% claimed that work in the grey economy supplied the household with some earnings. Beyond doubt, the quality, security and the longevity of jobs in the shadow economy is lower than in the formal sector. However, they (especially women with large numbers of children) may be in favour of self-employment and more independent flexible kinds of work rather than regimented wage labour. An alarmingly high number of national sample participants said that their households also relied on social benefits (74.2%) (excluding child endowment). Some Roma during fieldwork explained to me that the State has turned them into “social welfare addicts” in the sense that many young Roma get married as soon as they can, have children (child endowment increases with the number of children) and then retire. However, Romani women are powerless to retire so quickly since girls/women are primarily responsible for both the biological and cultural reproduction of Romani tradition and values. Thus, apart from their never-ending tasks related to child-bearing, childcare and domestic duties, as guardians of “culture” they are also responsible for transmitting Romani values to their children.

This may be their only alternative since mothers often cannot provide intellectually stimulating experiences for their children as a result of their own bleak educational backgrounds. Alarmingly, nearly half of the female participants (over 18 years of age) in the national sample are illiterate (45.8%), while more than a third (39.7%) did not finish primary school. Discouragingly, 12.3% finished primary school and only 2.2% finished secondary school while none of the women in this sample completed tertiary studies. These statistics show that even compared to Romani men, women fare poorly and evidently have poor access to education (see Table 1), which in turn disadvantages them to gaining access to economic forms of capital (i.e., employment opportunities) as well as other forms of capital.

Table 1
 Educational attainment (%)
 among Romani women and
 men over 18 years of age

	No schooling	1-4 grades	Unfinished primary school	Primary school	Secondary school	Total
Women	45.8	21.5	18.2	12.3	2.2	456
Men	18.9	26.9	23.8	21.4	9.0	509

Source: Field study 2004

Unfortunately, even though their children may have more opportunities to attend school now compared to when they were young, poverty also affects children's learning because parents cannot afford toys, books, quality childcare, school supplies, extracurricular activities, or private lessons. Poverty also limits families' choices for recreation and leisure which is also important to well-being. This often encourages high-risk and unhealthy habits – such as smoking and drinking because they have an over-supply of unstructured time (Park, Turnbull & Turnbull, 2002). As a rule, Romani women do not leave their neighbourhoods and certainly do not play sports or participate in any type of recreational programme; this is related to social expectations and traditional norms, limited mobility as well as their abject poverty. This has certainly encouraged harmful and high-risk habits as smoking among Romani women is rife, even among pregnant and breast-feeding women.

Since most household incomes are irregular (e.g., scrap metal can only be collected between March and December depending on the weather conditions or working on farms is seasonal work) and hardly sufficient to satisfy their basic family needs, households in the lowest echelons of income distribution cannot save. As a result they have less access to housing credits and experience more fear of eviction. A very high number of participants (57.1%) rated their living arrangements as unsolved, substandard and very poor. Expulsion from their homes can entail loss of physical capital, separation from their support networks, disruption of daily and childcare routines, separation of children from families, as well as the breakdown of existing links with health care services and educational institutions that all have severe repercussions for women especially.¹⁶

5) Social capital¹⁷ consists of help from family, friends and other sources and is also a measure of well-being. One would expect Romani women to fare better in kinship and friendship relationships, but this is yet another way they are marginalised. Their relationship networks are usually small since most of them had to leave their natal households upon “marriage” based on rules of virilocal residence.¹⁸ Moreover, getting help when in need from family and friends is often impossible in their present neighbourhoods since other women are often in the same predicament. For example, many women told me that they cannot ask other women (mother-in-law/kin/friends) to help out in childcare because these women have their own children to look after. In addition, an individual's social capital is determined by the sum of its cumulated resources

(both cultural capital and economic capital) in which Romani women fare very poorly. Undoubtedly, Romani women's reproductive as well as social expectations (i.e., their prescribed role as women as well as the social control mechanisms – gossip, physical punishment) that are at work in a Romani community limit their mobility and time availability and thus considerably limit the size of their network, which is almost always comprised of women who have in all probability less cumulated cultural and economic resources. Overall, national sample participants claimed that their main sources of information come from talks with family members or friends (84.3%). Although more than a third of the women (36.1%) according to the national sample data participate in work outside the home, this is in the informal sector doing seasonal farm work, helping out in a (farm) household, collecting herbs and scrap metal, begging, etc. Wider support from wider community groups, social services and educational/religious institutions is not within Romani women's reach as a result of their low educational attainment levels and lack of employment in the formal economy outside their Roma communities.

Kuršanec All in all, the Roma fare poorly on all of these measures of well-being (household appliances, housing condi-



tions, neighbourhood and community conditions making ends meet, and social capital) which makes life to a large extent more difficult for Roma women. These poor living conditions significantly adversely affect the ways in which Roma women can look after their families and themselves.

Concluding remarks

There is a conspicuous absence of the elderly in Roma communities that seems to have everything to do with the difficulty of Romani life (88.8% of all household members in the national sample are under 60 years of age). Poor living conditions (inadequate housing/conditions, poor infrastructure, low income levels, and weak social capital networks) almost certainly have a negative impact on their health. Undisputedly, a population who has low levels of education have probably not acquired the tools to take control over their own health, since schools are a key source of information on hygiene, nutrition, disease prevention and access to the health system. Women, in particular, often do not acquire the literacy and critical thinking skills to care for themselves and their families as well as to modify cultural practices which adversely impact their well-being (Pomykala & Holt, 2002). Many women expressed feelings of helplessness: this was related to their inability to read instructions on medicine bottles, to decipher bills, to understand their children's homework, to comprehend road signs, to figure out bureaucratic procedures, etc. People who cannot read are helplessly disadvantaged in their everyday lives but also powerless before governments.

Recommendations

- Since the Roma are a semi-illiterate population and have limited chances of representing themselves properly,¹⁹ non-governmental organisations with the aim of improving all social, cultural and economic opportunities for the Roma population should ensure that all Roma are included in their programmes and initiatives. Special consideration should be given to Romani women so that they are not overlooked in policies devised on behalf of Roma at the non-governmental and governmental levels.
- Children (both girls and boys) from diverse circumstances should be able and encouraged to equally participate in the education system. As a way of developing the country's human capital, attention should be on the critical periods: early childhood (pre-school) and

secondary levels. Early childhood programmes are crucial to eliminate language barriers and to familiarise children with a school environment. Following primary level, higher levels of education are important to improve children's access to different forms of capital and to amend their marginalised position. Women are crucial for this integration. As they are primarily responsible for their children, they also have important roles as mediators between their children and the school (e.g., parent-teacher meetings, school events, educational programmes).

- Home-learning programmes could also be developed specifically for Romani women to improve their skills since most adult women have been deprived of education. By improving their knowledge this would in turn improve the health, education and welfare of the entire Romani community.
- There is also a strong need to raise awareness, education and understanding as well as infrastructures and programmes to address problems that directly and indirectly impact women so that they are not so vulnerable. For example, to protect Romani women against domestic violence who are more vulnerable in poor social and economic situations exacerbated by high unemployment rates and alcoholism problems.²⁰

FOOTNOTES

¹ According to Bourdieu (1986) who was particularly interested in the reproduction of inequalities, an individual's position in a social space is defined not by class, but by the amounts of capital they have access to. He distinguished four different forms of capital (economic, cultural, social and symbolic) that are all interconnected, context-specific and together constitute advantage and disadvantage in society.

² The Romani settlements included: Capraške Poljane, Palanjak, Kutina-Radićeva (County of Sisak-Moslavina); Ludbreg, Sveti Đurđ (County of Varaždin); Kuršanec, Lončarevo, Piškorovec (County of Međimurje); Đurđevac - Stiska (County of Koprivnica-Križevci); and Puškarići, Oštarije (County of Karlovac).

³ These figures show that processes of traditionalisation are at work among the Roma population. In comparison, according to the 2001 census, women in Croatia marry at a later age (25.1 years) and have their first-born at 25.4 years.

⁴ Participants in the national sample ranked children as one of the most important values of social and individual life.

⁵ Mršević (2000) has noted similar practices in Serbia.

⁶ Although these Romani settlements never failed to shock me, in some way, I was taken aback by a small impoverished settlement called Sveti Đurđ in the Varaždin County; a slum in its entirety.

⁷ These extended measures of well-being are based on Kurt J. Bauman's report (2003).

- ⁸ Based on statistics from the national sample over half of the households have between 5 to 8 members.
- ⁹ In many homes it was wet and cold enough to see your breath and even though they are one of the groups most vulnerable to the effects of cold indoor temperatures (dampness and condensation) they often cannot afford a suitable/efficient system of heating.
- ¹⁰ Poor living conditions including overcrowding and inadequate sanitation make Gypsy communities more susceptible to communicable diseases – for example, hepatitis and tuberculosis and skin diseases such as eczema; Ringold (2000).
- ¹¹ This not only includes scrap metal collection but collection of anything that has some value, including food for pigs. A woman (mother of three children in her early thirties) from Ludbreg told me that she often goes to the nearby dump (in her backyard) in search of food and clothes because begging for her would be shameful.
- ¹² Over the last year, several accidents have been reported at various hazardous sites: A thirteen year old was tragically killed when he was run over by a waste disposal truck while collecting scraps at the rubbish dump in Kutina; A father (50) and son (17) were killed in an accident when a train hit the truck they were in. The other two persons in the truck are in a critical condition. They were looking for scrap metal.
- ¹³ Encouragingly, catering establishment (inn/café) was last on their list.
- ¹⁴ Participants from the national sample rated finished school (4.96) and health (4.40) as very important on a scale of 1–5.
- ¹⁵ Studies have shown that adequate family financial resources are linked with self-esteem in mothers (see Brody and Flor, 1997).
- ¹⁶ A number of Romani communities are currently facing eviction. 1) About three hundred Roma are facing eviction from Plinarsko naselje in the City of Zagreb after living there for 15 years. Since no alternative accommodation has been offered, Romani children will be separated from parents and placed in homes. 2) The resettlement of the Roma from Rujevica, a settlement that the Roma have been building for about 40 years. This particular group of Roma do not want to be ghettoised in barracks that do not offer minimal living conditions compared to their present homes. 3) The eviction of displaced Roma from different parts of Croatia who have been living in Luka-vec for the past 14 years.
- ¹⁷ Bourdieu points out that an individual's social capital is determined by the size of their relationship network, the sum of its cumulated resources (both cultural and economic) and how successful (quickly) the individual can set them into motion in that these networks must be continuously maintained and fostered over time to be called upon quickly in the future.
- ¹⁸ Results from the national sample indicate that more Romani men (60.6%) still live in their places of birth compared to women (39.4%), who left their natal households.
- ¹⁹ It became evident during fieldwork that even between two neighbouring counties such as Međimurje and Varaždin that the Roma in the former have more privileges (e.g., food stamps, local kindergarten) and perhaps more representation.

²⁰ Only one Romani women spoke openly about domestic violence that was initiated by her refusal to partake in two arranged marriages during her youth. Nevertheless, some of the men that were present at the interviews besides interrupting frequently, degraded their “wives” without shame by saying that they were ignorant and referred to them in derogatory ways despite my efforts encouraging women to speak.