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FINAL REPORT

Project title: "Voter Education Campaign with Roma Women and Youth"

Project implementation period: 15 April - 30 June 2017

Implementing organisation: Institute of Romani Culture in Albania (IRCA)

Project goal: To strengthen the electoral knowledge of Roma women and youth

Results: 22 awareness-raising sessions were organised with Roma women and youth on election participation in the areas of Gjirokastra, Lezha, Durrës, Delvina, Berat, Fier, Korçë, Tirana, Elbasan, Shkodra and Pogradec. The sessions were divided in two phases:

1. 13 Electoral Education training activities
2. 9 Awareness-raising activities through Roma Electoral Officers

Topics addressed in these sessions include:

Forms of violation of the election process

- Vote-buying
- Family voting
- Importance of women's participation in elections
- Importance of first-time voter's participation in elections

Names in voters' lists were identified in two ways:

- List made available by the relevant Commissions of Electoral Administration Zones;
- General Directorate of Civil Service online platform made available by the Ministry of Internal Affairs (online platform for voters to find their name on voters' lists and location of polling station by inserting their name, father's name and surname. See link <http://134.0.58.65/votinglistapp/>)

Around 760 Roma people participated in the awareness sessions: 432 women and girls, and 328 men and boys. This initiative encouraged the participation in elections of around 826 Roma voters in the regions of Gjirokastra, Lezha, Durrës, Delvina, Berat, Fier out of 1,336 whose name was on the voters' lists.

This project was implemented by the OSCE Presence in Albania (PiA) in collaboration with the Institute of Romani Culture in Albania (IRCA) as implementing partner, and the Central Election Commission. It was financially supported by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).

Note: This report was produced by IRCA, and it does not necessarily represent the views of the OSCE PiA.

Report

“Info session with the Roma community on participation in the election process” 20 April 2017, "Donika Kastrioti" Neighbourhood, Berat



The info and awareness-raising session with the Roma community members took place on 20 April 2017. 25 youth and women participated in the meeting. The local facilitator Bukurie Kovaçi explained the purpose of the activity and spoke briefly about the importance of voting, highlighting that their participation in election will be a strong voice. A discussion on the phenomenon of vote buying followed. The facilitator urged them to refrain from selling their vote, in order to demonstrate their civic values. Then, an election process was staged, with two ‘MP candidates’ selected among the participants. They made their electoral campaign and a simulated voting followed. The voting process was explained step by step by the facilitator. In the end, the facilitator’s main message to the community was to draw up a list of demands/needs and present it to the candidate(s).

Report
“Info session with the Roma community on participation in the election process”
21 April 2017 Baltëz, Fier



The info session on participation in the election process took place on 21 April 2017, attended by fifteen youth and women from Baltëz, Fieri. Elidjon Veizi, the local facilitator, gave the message on the importance of each individual vote. Then, participants were engaged in a simulated voting process. At this stage, each element of the voting process was explained thoroughly. Once the simulation was over, the community members raised questions about issues they are least informed about, such as:

1. Can we vote with ID document, such as a driving license?
2. How can immigrants apply?

Considering that the local Roma community was more aware of the participation in elections, we discussed on the importance of each vote in the fulfilment of a petition that the community will address to the candidate upon his/her platform to the Roma community. The petition will include key problems affecting the Roma community in the area. The agreed that the petition will be drawn up by the community representatives. Participants expressed their willingness to cooperate during elections.

Report
“Info session with the Roma community on participation in the election process”
21 April 2017 Driza, Fier



The info and awareness-raising session about the participation in the election process and the importance of each vote took place on 24 April 2017. The local facilitator Eduart Koçi informed 25 attending members of the Roma community about the regular voting process. He explained the purpose of this event and launched an open discussion about the problems Roma have during elections. Vote buying is a problem and Roma are targeted by any candidate due to their economic hardships. Another problem raised is employment, with most of them engaged in seasonal labour in neighbouring countries. The facilitator moderated the discussion and gave them some tips on how to mobilize to ensure a high election turnout.

Report
“Info session with the Roma community on participation in the election process”
22 April 2017, Ish Pjeshkorja, Berat



On 22 April 2017, the info and awareness-raising session on participation in elections and importance of vote took place in Ish Pjeshkorja. 21 members from the Roma community were informed about the regular voting process through a simulation. First, the local facilitator Besmir Dalipi introduced the project. Then, the CEC representative, Mr. Albjon Sulaj explained the importance of voting and encouraged participants to engage actively in the elections and ensure that they are properly represented. The simulation was followed by a discussion on the mobilization of the Roma community during election campaigns for accountability. The community leader and the community members need to elaborate a list of priorities with their main living problems and present it to the candidates.

Report
“Info session with the Roma community on participation in the election process”
4 May 2017, Elbasan



On 4 May 2017, an awareness-raising and information meeting with Roma and Egyptian youth took place in Elbasan. 16 youth engaged in a discussion about the election process. First, IRCA representative Aurora Koçi presented the initiative. The OSCE-contracted expert, Manjola Veizi put the emphasis on the importance of voting and participation in the election process. The local facilitator Princ Mustafaj explained what IDs are valid for citizens to vote. The participating youth were Roma activists, and they raised the problem of vote-buying and pressure by political subjects to influence their voting. In the end, the youth said they are willing to raise-awareness among their peers on participation in elections.

Report
“Info session with the Roma community on participation in the election process”
4 May 2017, Rrapishtë, Elbasan



An info session on participation in the election process was organised on 4 May 2017, attended by 22 youth and women living in the Rrapishtë area, Elbasan. IRCA representative Aurora Koçi presented the initiative to the participants, and then the OSCE-contracted expert Manjola Veizi gave the message about the importance of voting and casting the ballot as a civic responsibility. The local facilitator Princ Mustafaj urged a discussion on the regular election process. Participants were very active in the discussion, focusing on many issues in their area, such as vote buying, the promises political subjects make to the community, representation of the community in public life, etc. In the end, all participants said they would be active participants on election day.

Report
“Info session with the Roma community on participation in the election process”
5 May 2017, Lezha



The info and awareness-raising training event on participation in the election process took place in Lezha on 5 May 2017. IRCA representative Aurora Koçi presented the initiative to the 17 Roma youth attending the event. Then, she gave the floor to the OSCE-contracted expert, Manjola Veizi, who explained that participation in elections is an active civic responsibility. The local facilitator Edison Kipti elaborated some of the key points of the training, including:

1. Documents required to vote
2. Challenges the community might have to cope with at the voting station.
3. Awareness-raising on vote buying.

In the end, an election process was simulated with roles assigned to the participants who engaged quite actively.

Report

“Info session with the Roma community on participation in the election process”

7 May 2017, Intercultural Community Centre, Pogradec



On 7 May 2017, the local facilitator Veltnina Veshollari delivered the info and awareness-raising session on participation in elections and importance of vote, at the Intercultural Community Centre in Pogradec. The 12 Roma youth participating in the event were acquainted with the elements of a regular election process. Initially, IRCA representative Aurora Koçi explained the objectives of the event and opened a discussion. The youth said they feel disappointed with politicians and see no point in participating in the elections. The facilitator steered the discussion towards the civic responsibility of each individual to cast their vote, and suggested that the community must hold political subjects accountable. In the end, the youth became aware of the importance of participating in the elections.

Report

“Info session with the Roma community on participation in the election process”

8 May 2017, Gjeologjikja, Korçë



The info and awareness-raising session on participation in the elections and importance of voting took place in Gjeologjikja, Korça, on 8 May 2017. Participating in the activity were 23 members of the Roma community. In the beginning, the initiative and the participants were introduced. Then, the CEC representative, Mr. Denajda Dushku, took the floor to speak about the importance of voting in elections. She explained that voting entitles the citizen to hold the elected representatives accountable. The local facilitator, Ëngjellushe Kosturi presented the ID documents that the community must have in order to participate in the elections. In the second part, she guided a discussion on the problems faced by this community. They mentioned the need to have meetings with the representatives of political subjects, so that they could explain their concerns. They also promised to mobilize and be more demanding during the election campaign.

Report
“Info session with the Roma community on participation in the election process”
8 May 2017, Intercultural Community Centre, Korçë



25 Roma youth participated in the training and awareness-raising event on the participation in the election process held on 8 May 2017, at the premises of the Intercultural Community Centre in Korçë. The IRCA representative Aurora Koçi introduced the initiative to the participants. Then she gave the floor to the CEC representative, Denada Dushku, who spoke about the importance of casting the vote. Then, the local facilitator, Anxhela Zeneli thoroughly explained the documentation required and the incidents that the community could be faced with in the voting stations. She staged an election process so that participants could learn by doing and become familiar with the regular election process. In the end, the entire community adhered to the message delivered in this session and vowed to participate in the elections.

Report
“Info session with the Roma community on participation in the election process”
9 May 2017, Kinotheatre, Delvinë



The training and awareness-raising event on participation in the election process with 22 Roma youth took place at the Kinotheatre, Delvina, on 9 May 2017. IRCA representative Kludja Hamiti introduced them to the initiative and staged an electoral process, highlighting the challenges any voter has to cope with at the voting station, and explained what a regular election process is. In the end, the facilitator Aurora Koçi briefed the participants in more detail about the regular voting process and raised awareness on active and responsible participation in elections.

Report

“Info session with the Roma community on participation in the election process” 9 May 2017, Intercultural Community Centre, Gjirokastër



25 youth and women from the Roma community participated in the training and awareness-raising event on participation in the election process, organised at the Intercultural Community Centre, Gjirokastër on 9 May 2017. The IRCA representative, Aurora Koçi, introduced the initiative. Then the CEC representative Nertil Nebiaj spoke about the importance of voting. The local trainer Krenar Ajdini explained the ID documents required to vote. He also explained the process to be followed by anyone wishing to become an election observer. In the end, he highlighted the importance of community mobilization and awareness-raising on participation in elections.

Report

“Info session with the Roma community on participation in the election process”

17 May 2017, Community-based Centre, Shkodër



On 17 May 2017, an info session on the election process took place at the Community-based Centre in Shkodër. Attending the event were 17 members from the Roma community, mostly women. The local facilitator, Marjus Veizi, presented the initiative and moderated a discussion on the problems affecting the Roma community. They attributed their low turnout by the disappointment of the Roma community. In the end, the participants said the training was very useful and committed to show civic responsibility by participating in the elections.

Report
“Info session with the Roma community on participation in the election process”
Electoral Office, Lezha

During 27-31 May 2017, the Electoral Office representative Edison Kipti identified the areas with Roma population and obtained this information:

1. Roma populated areas include the quarters “Skenderbeg”, “Besëlidhja”, “SMT”, “Gurra” and “Spital” in Lezha.
2. On-site visits showed that 90% of the Roma community resided in the “Skenderbeg” quarter, while 10% was distributed among “SMT”, “Gurra”, “Besëlidhja” and “Spital”.

On 2 June 2017, the initiative and the Electoral Office representative Edison Kipti were introduced to the CEAZ representatives. The voters' list was checked in this meeting. The list was later consulted with the community and all Roma members had their names in it.

The next activity took place on 5 June 2017 with the first-time voters. 9 young voters were trained on the election process; they were informed on what constitutes an electoral violation, or what steps to take in case voters are not allowed to vote and how to report such cases.

An awareness-raising event with women and girls took place on 16 June 2017, urging them to participate in the elections. This meeting focused on the importance of elections, voting modalities, the documents required to vote, etc. Being that women were less informed on elections, the difference between central and local elections was explained to them. For the verification of names on the voters' list, the Electoral Office representative used the online application of the General Directorate of Civil Status, made available by the CEC and the Ministry of Internal Affairs. 14 Roma members participated in this meeting.

Also, two awareness-raising sessions involving 49 youth took place on 17-21 June 2017, focusing on participation in decision-making through vote casting. The participants expressed their willingness to participate in the elections.

Verification of the Roma community names in the voters' lists through the online platform took place between 10 and 22 June 2017. Around 850 Roma persons obtained information on their Voting Station.

Electoral Office in Lezha (photos)



Report
“Info session with the Roma community on participation in the election process”
Electoral Office, Berat

Two representatives of the Electoral Offices, Besmir Dalipi and Ana Avdiu prepared a joint plan and divided the areas they would deliver the awareness-raising sessions in Berat, in order to cover all the Roma community.

First, through meetings and invitations in each activity, they established cooperation bridges between the community and CEC regional offices.

4 awareness-raising sessions took place during 6-19 June 2017 as follows:

Two sessions were held in Morava with 17 Roma members and in Ish Pjeshkorja with 23 members. The focus of both sessions was on two key points:

- Vote buying
- Participation in elections

Also, two activities were organised on 19 June: one in "Donika Kastrioti" quarter attended by 22 women and youth who participated in such activity for the first time. The second activity took place door to door, encouraging 25 family members and also first-time voters to participate in the election process.

In line with the plan, both representatives of the Electoral Offices checked the voters' lists placed near the areas where Roma community live.

Electoral Office in Berat (photos)



Report
“Info session with the Roma community on participation in the election process”
Electoral Office, Elbasan

Awareness-raising sessions with Roma first-time voters and Roma women and girls in Rrapishtë, Elbasan were delivered between 27 May and 25 June 2017 by the Electoral Office representative Princ Mustafaj.

On 15 June 2017, a meeting with 10 first-time voters was organised. In this session, they were briefed in detail what documents are needed to participate in the elections, steps to be taken if the name is missing on the voters' lists, and the importance of individual vote.

The meeting with the Roma women and girls took place on 22 June 2017. Participating in this session were 14 community members who became aware of the importance of free vote, free from family influence, because Roma women and girls are often influenced by the other family members.

Verification of names against the voters' list took place in the second week of June, in order to avoid non-participation in elections.



Report
“Info session with the Roma community on participation in the election process”
Electoral Office, Durrës

The working plan to be implemented in Durrës was finalised on 24 May. Identification of areas populated by the Roma community and their concerns related to the election process took place during the last week of May. Their most common concerns were:

1. Lack of information about the location of the voting station.
2. Lack of ID to participate in elections.
3. Lack of information about the election process.

On 30 May, the local representative of the Electoral Office in Durrës, Altin Xhaferri, made the presentation at the CEC local office in Durrës. This meeting aimed at identifying the office needs and assist the community in addressing their electoral concerns.

Based on the working plan, the local representative of the Electoral Office delivered the awareness-raising event with first-time voters, consisting of Roma women and other members. This meeting took place on 7 June 2017 at the Community Centre in Nishtulla. During the meeting, the participants' names were checked against the online platform and the local representative retrieved them in printed format. Then, another training session on the regular election process took place, focusing on the importance of individual vote. This part of the agenda was conceived in the form of an interactive discussion with the community, noting the problems they face during campaigns. The OSCE-contracted expert, Manjola Veizi, paid particular importance to awareness-raising and vote buying. The 22 Roma members present vowed to participate in the elections without selling their vote.

The second awareness-raising event on participation in elections with Roma members living at Porto Romano, Durrës was organised at the Community Centre in Nishtulla on 16 June 2017. The meeting started with the voters' list and the local representative of the Electoral Chamber printed the participants' names from the online platform. Then, awareness-raising clips were presented that urged them to share similar experiences during elections. Also, the community became familiar with the green line available to report any obstruction of free participation in elections. The participants were encouraged to participate in elections at their own free will. 13 Roma members participated in this awareness-raising event.

Also, daily and individual community-based efforts seek to:

1. Refer a Roma member to add his/her name on the voters' lists;
2. Individual meetings with the community to instruct them to find their name on the online platform;
3. Facilitate and coordinate the Roma community to obtain ID cards.

Report
“Info session with the Roma community on participation in the election process”
Electoral Office, Korçë

In Korçë, all quarters with Roma population were covered by the representatives of the Electoral Office, Ëngjëllushe Kosturi and Egla Rapushi.

Initially, each representative made a working plan and then identified the areas where Roma community lived, mainly quarters 6, 7, 8, 16, 17 and 11. Daily events and group-based activities were organised in these quarters, as below:

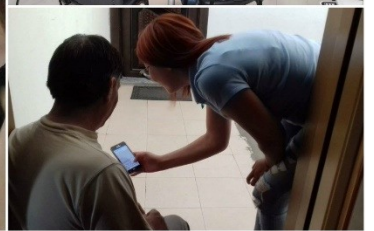
A meeting with youth, mostly first-time voters took place on 7 June 2017, focusing on the importance of representative decision-making, importance of individual vote and the individual right to decide for ourselves. 24 youth participated in this session.

A meeting with 15 first-time voters took place on 8 June 2017.

Two meetings were organised on 17 June 2017 with 52 women and girls to raise awareness on participation in elections. The emphasis was placed on the importance of individual vote and participation in decision-making as a civil responsibility.

Also, door-to-door meetings took place in May-June to assist Roma members find their names on the voters' lists. Such verification was made through the online platform of the General Directorate of Civil Status.

Electoral Office in Korçë (photos)



Report
“Info session with the Roma community on participation in the election process”
Electoral Office, Delvina

Initially, the Electoral Office representative, Liljana Majko designed the working plan and scheduled the dates of intervention. Also, she made a personal map to guide her in the intervention areas.

Based on the working plan, Majko organised the first meeting with CEAZ representatives on 3 May 2016. She presented the initiative and they agreed on further cooperation to raising awareness of Roma community in Delvina. The CEAZ representative expressed his readiness to make available the voters' list and identify the voting stations where the Roma citizens were assigned to vote.

On 4-6 May 2017, door-to-door awareness-raising session took place, involving 21 first-time voters. They were provided with knowledge on the voting process and were explained the importance of their individual vote. The goal was to encourage the youth to vote in elections. Discussions with their family members also took place.

On 7-11 May 2017, awareness-raising sessions were organised with Roma women and girls. They were explained how important participation in decision-making is and how this can be achieved through elections. Also, they were encouraged to use their vote responsibly and not fall prey of vote buying. 35 women and girls participated in these training sessions.

Also, a meeting with OSCE representatives was organised, as they needed data about the Roma community in Delvina.

On 12-22 June 2017, the names of all Roma members were checked against the voters' lists made available by CEAZ, concluding that all Roma members were registered in voting stations. 3 members had errors in their name and the local representative and CEAZ cooperated to facilitate correction.

On 20-21 June 2017, awareness-raising session were organised with 30 Roma members. They were trained on the regular election process where the Electoral Office representative, Liljana Majko explained all the voting steps. Then, the OSCE-contracted expert, Manjola Veizi spoke about the importance of Roam involvement in the decision-making process.

Electoral Office in Delvina (photos)



Report
“Info session with the Roma community on participation in the election process”
Electoral Office, Gjirokastra

The Electoral Office representative, Krenar Ajdini organised the introduction meeting with the CEAZ representatives in the last week of May to present the project and strengthen cooperation, so that a high number of Roma members can participate in elections.

On 4 June 2017, a training session on the electoral process was organised with 7 Roma youth at "Zinxhiraj" quarter. They were uninformed about voting modalities. Then, their names were checked in the voters' lists.

The next activity took place on 12 June 2017, with 16 Roma men and women obtaining information about the election process. The presence of OSCE and CEC representatives gave more prominence to this meeting. Roma community became aware of not selling their vote, but rather express their will freely and uninfluenced.

On 19 June 2017, the voters' lists were obtained from CEAZ and all the names of the Roma members were checked and their voting stations were identified.

Awareness-raising sessions on participation in the election process continued on 21-22 June 2017, with the participation of 29 women and youth from the Roma community.

Electoral Office in Gjirokastra (photos)



Report

“Info session with the Roma community on participation in the election process” Electoral Office, Fier

In Fieri area, the Electoral Office representative Elidjon Veizi organised a set of awareness-raising sessions to encourage youth and women to participate in elections.

After designing a plan and identifying the intervention areas, Veizi started with the implementation of the plan. Initially, he identified the voters' lists, with the Roma members going themselves to the centres where the lists were posted. Verification found that there were around 500 voters from the Roma community.

The first activity for raising awareness on participation in elections took place on 7 June 2017 with 10 Roma representatives from Baltëz village attending. The meeting focused on the phenomenon of vote buying and the regular election process.

Then, on 20 June 2017, another activity with 28 youth, women and men from Baltëz village took place, encouraging them to participate in the elections. Many of the participants were uninformed about the details of the voting process.

Also, a meeting with 5 first-time voters took place on 24 June 2017. They were acquainted and informed in detail about the voting process and became aware of the importance of participating in elections.

Electoral Office in Fier (photos)



Report
“Info session with the Roma community on participation in the election process”
Electoral Office, Tirana

Tirana area was covered by the Electoral Office representative, Renata Azemi, who designed a working plan and then identified the voters' lists.

Then, on 8 June 2017, she organised an info and awareness-raising session with 15 women at the suburban area "Institut" in Tirana. Topics covered included:

- Why citizens will to participate in elections is important?
- How important is citizens' awareness-raising to refrain from selling their vote?

The interactive discussion with the participants showed that many of them lacked information about these topics and some of them had never voted.

On 15 June 2017, another awareness-raising session was organised with 19 Roma women and girls of quarter 10 “Komunale”. Their awareness on participation in elections was raised through discussions and interactive debates.



Annex 1: Assessment

Initially, the selection of election trainers that would hold community sessions took place. During project implementation, some trainer withdrew (going abroad or health problems) and IRCA replaced them in order to meet the project objective. This was smoothly done, given IRCA's experience in election education training.

As for the shift of activities from Kuçova to Shkodra, we must note the significant lack of involvement of the Roma community to participate in events on election process. The activity was implemented in Shkodra because of the considerable need of the Roma community there to get involved and guided on the election process, as well as the lack of other initiatives with this focus.

We selected 11 persons (electoral officers) for this initiative. They conducted events in 9 regions, specifically in Lezha, Berat, Elbasan, Durrës, Korçë, Delvinë, Gjirokastër, Fier and Tiranë. Two electoral officers were engaged in Korçë region and Berati region, given their geographical span and the high number of Roma population.

Activities were organised in various forms: simulations of the election process and discussions to activate the community. These activities helped the community obtain more knowledge about the regular voting process, identify problems they may encounter in polling stations and report such concerns. Some trainers organised individual meetings or group meetings (3-4 persons) in informal discussions. Some others took a door-to-door approach. Verification of names in the voters' lists was facilitated by CEAZ lists and the GDCS online platform made available by the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

Identification of the number of persons who participated in elections was organised with Roma members in groups, escorting them to the voting station, such as in Gjirokastra. Participation in elections in Lezha, Korçë, Delvinë and Berat was verified through constant contacts with Local Observers in each voting station.

The main challenge during the sessions was the significant lack of will by the Roma community members to participate in the sessions.

Annex 2: Statistics

Source: Electoral Offices representatives

Number of Roma voters in 2017 Elections				Participating in Awareness-Raising Sessions	
				M	F
Town	Quarters	No. of Voters	Voters		
Gjirokaštër	Zinxhiraj	130	129	47	37
Lezha	Skenderbeg, Besëlidhja, SMT, Gurra, Spital	850	700	43	41
Durrës	Nishtullë, Porto Romano,		150	17	19
Delvina	Sinan Ballaci, 9 Tetori, Bigor, Çorro	150	150	24	40
Berat	Moravë, Ish Pjeshkorja, Donika Kastrioti	686	376	54	55
Fier	Baltëz	500	300	49	25
Korçë	Qaurters 6, 7,8,16,17,11.	No data	No data	23	65
Tiranë	Quarter 10, Institut Kodër-Kamëz	No data	No data	2	32
Elbasan	Rrapishtë	No data	No data	18	44
Shkodër	Shkodër	No data	No data	4	14
Pogradec	Pogradec	No data	No data	4	8
		1336	826	328	432

Institute of Romani Culture in Albania