

Roma Task Force

Meeting Details			
20.09.2024 - Next meeting planned for 25 nd of October 2024			
10.00 am			
“Roma Voice” Coalition INTERSOS			
allamarin7@yahoo.com liaison.moldova@intersos.org			
Agenda			
<p>Agenda:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Report on the Roma history sessions by Tarna Rom, UNHCR and UNICEF with teachers in educational institutions 2. Roma mapping updates and decrease in the number of beneficiaries in the RACS 3. Mapping of organizations working in the private accomodations 4. Discussion on Roma citizens of Moldova who have been living in Ukraine 5. Update on RAC T6 6. AoB 			
Participants			
<p><i>INTERSOS</i></p> <p><i>Tarna Rom</i></p> <p><i>UNHCR</i></p> <p><i>WeWorld</i></p>	<p><i>Roma Voice Coalition</i></p> <p><i>US Embassy</i></p> <p><i>OHCHR</i></p> <p><i>UNICEF Moldova</i></p>	<p><i>Roma Ethnographic Association</i></p> <p><i>UN Women</i></p> <p><i>Roma Women Platform - Romni</i></p> <p><i>Porojan Association</i></p>	<p><i>CWS</i></p> <p><i>IOM Moldova</i></p> <p><i>MEC</i></p> <p><i>State Commission on Migration and Asylum</i></p>

Summary of discussions and agreements/ action points

Agenda	Discussion
<p>1. Report on the Roma history sessions by Tarna Rom, UNHCR and UNICEF with teachers in educational institutions</p> <p>Cristina Sîrbu Co-Chair Roma Task Force, Head of Communication & Advocacy <i>INTERSOS Moldova</i></p> <p>Nina Cuşnir Project Coordinator for Education and Child Protection <i>Tarna Rom</i></p> <p>Cristina Sîrbu Co-Chair Roma Task Force, Head of Communication & Advocacy <i>INTERSOS Moldova</i></p> <p>Marin Alla Co-Chair Roma Task Force, General Director <i>Roma Voice Coalition</i></p>	<p>Cristina Sîrbu, co-chair of the Task Force on behalf of Intersos Moldova, welcomed everybody, presented the Agenda of the meeting and asked if anyone wanted to add another item to the agenda.</p> <p>Mrs. Cusnir reported that, starting in January 2024, her team made sustained efforts to enroll Roma refugee children in schools. Together with UNICEF, UNHCR, and the Ministry of Education and Research, they organized visits to educational institutions in Popeasca, Ştefan Vodă, and Chişinău. Additionally, they held informational sessions for teachers, focusing on adapted educational methods, bullying prevention and anti-discrimination. Although many children were successfully enrolled, the main challenge, according to her, remains preventing school dropout.</p> <p>Cristina Sirbu mentioned that the action related to supporting the Roma population is part of the National Plan for Support of the Roma Population 2022-2025, but has not yet been implemented due to insufficient budget allocation. Despite the plan's creation, minimal funding made it impossible to carry out. She suggested expanding the initiative and including it in the programming of the RTF members for the following year.</p> <p>Marin Alla thanked those who contributed to organizing the events and emphasized the importance of the Roma Support Program for the 2022-2025 period. He stated that this program should bring benefits to the Roma community and schools. He also highlighted the need for external partners to address issues related to school dropout and Roma children's absence from education, through long-term solutions and integrating them into the educational system.</p>

Cristina Sîrbu
Co-Chair Roma Task Force,
Head of Communication &
Advocacy
INTERSOS Moldova

Cristina Sîrbu highlighted the positive impact of activities related to education carried out during Roma Week, emphasizing the collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Research and other key partners. She noted that such actions are essential in shaping future generations to recognize and reject discrimination from an early age. For the future, she suggested continuing and expanding these activities within educational institutions.

Marin Alla
Co-Chair Roma
Task Force,
General Director
Roma Voice Coalition

Marin Alla emphasized that education for Roma refugee groups is in its early stages, and understanding and developing tools for a positive impact are essential. He mentioned the role of the Ministry of Education and Research, local authorities, and teachers in monitoring the children and implementing solutions for their long-term school attendance. He also highlighted the major challenge posed by Roma migration and the need to keep children in school for at least three months.

<p>2. Roma mapping updates and decrease in the number of beneficiaries in the RACs</p> <p>Cristina Sîrbu Co-Chair Roma Task Force, Head of Communication & Advocacy <i>INTERSOS Moldova</i></p> <p>3. Mapping of organizations working in the private accommodations</p>	<p>Cristina Sîrbu mentioned that the mapping exercise for Roma refugees in the country was started but stopped due to technical issues. The exercise will be completed by the end of the year, involving data collection in two stages: a survey to collect quantitative data about Roma refugees and focus group discussions to address identified issues. She emphasized that many Roma leave accommodation centers during the winter, intending to return the following year, and the questionnaire will be adjusted to reflect this trend. Ms. Sirbu invited partners to join the process.</p>
<p>Marin Alla Co-Chair Roma Task Force, General Director <i>Roma Voice Coalition</i></p> <p>Cristina Sîrbu Co-Chair Roma Task Force, Head of Communication & Advocacy <i>INTERSOS Moldova</i></p>	<p>Marin Alla highlighted that Roma refugees in temporary placement centers are among the most vulnerable and that monitoring their situation, especially for those in private spaces, is challenging. Although Roma people transit through Moldova has been significant, their numbers have decreased. Currently, authorities cannot accurately track where Roma in private spaces are located. Marin Alla emphasized the need to facilitate Roma children's access to education and improve their living conditions, aiming to prevent excessive migration to the European Union.</p> <p>Cristina Sîrbu emphasized the importance of gathering data on the interventions of partners with Roma refugees, including those in private accommodations, for reporting purposes. She clarified that in the past, when partners were asked to share their interventions for reports, the response was minimal or nonexistent. This data is crucial to demonstrate that the established mechanism is functioning and that partners are</p>

<p>Ivan Duminica Head of the Interethnic Relations Department <i>Ministry of Education and Research</i></p> <p>Cristina Sîrbu Co-Chair Roma Task Force, Head of Communication & Advocacy <i>INTERSOS Moldova</i></p>	<p>actively involved. She stressed that it's not enough to simply meet monthly; the data must reflect meaningful action and impact.</p> <p>Dr. hab. Ivan Duminica pointed out issues observed in temporary placement centers, particularly with organizations providing aid without coordinating with state institutions. He emphasized the need for strict rules and collaboration with the Ministry of Education and Research and the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection to ensure aid is evenly distributed. He mentioned cases of poor-quality food being delivered and stressed the importance of monitoring these processes. Additionally, he highlighted the importance of education for Roma children and recommended that all involved organizations work together efficiently for their benefit.</p> <p>Cristina Sîrbu mentioned that discussions about coordinating organizations have been ongoing since the beginning of the year, but due to other urgent matters, implementation hasn't happened yet. She believes that a complete mapping this year no longer makes sense, as most organizations' projects will end by the year's close. She proposes a session in November-December to clarify the coordination of programs for the next year and a physical meeting in January, where organizations can discuss and plan coordinated and impactful interventions.</p>
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4. Discussion on Roma citizens of Moldova who have been living in Ukraine

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Co-Chair Roma Task Force,
General Director
Roma Voice Coalition

Cristina Sîrbu
Co-Chair Roma Task Force,
Head of Communication & Advocacy
INTERSOS Moldova

Marin Alla highlighted that, as co-lead of the Roma Task Force, he and the team have observed ongoing challenges, particularly concerning families placed in temporary centers like Testemitanu. These families, some of whom hold Moldovan citizenship but have not lived in the country for many years, face difficulties in finding adequate housing and support. He stressed the importance of government responsibility in improving conditions for these vulnerable groups, particularly children. Mr. Alla recommended a coordinated effort with relevant institutions to ensure better living conditions in both private spaces and government-managed facilities, emphasizing the need to prioritize children's welfare.

Cristina Sîrbu clarified that the issue at hand is not exclusive to the Roma community, as many other refugees and displaced individuals due to various conflicts, including those from Ukraine, who are Moldovan citizens and thus cannot benefit from the same range of support when coming to Moldova after many years abroad. She emphasized the need for a broader discussion to determine the necessary steps regarding this issue, which should not involve only the Roma Task Force but also include the Protection Group. She suggested this conversation to be led by the Protection Group, as it addresses concerns impacting a diverse group of people.

5. Update on RAC T6

Cristina Sîrbu
Co-Chair Roma Task Force,
Head of Communication &
Advocacy
INTERSOS Moldova

Ion Duminica
Executive Director
Porojan Association

Cristina Sîrbu
Co-Chair Roma Task Force,
Head of Communication &
Advocacy
INTERSOS Moldova

Cristina Sîrbu provided an update on the Temporary Accommodation Centre for Refugees situated on str. Testimitanu 6 (RAC T6), which was established shortly after the start of the war in Ukraine. This center has primarily hosted Roma individuals and other ethnic minorities, benefiting from significant partner interventions. While there have been improvements, challenges remain, and the center is expected to close by the end of November or early December, as announced by the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection. Ms. Sîrbu emphasized the importance of facilitating smooth transitions for residents, ensuring continued educational opportunities for children, and securing employment for adults to promote self-sustainability. She urged all partners to concentrate their efforts to support those affected by this closure.

Mr. Ion Duminica emphasized the critical importance of ensuring stable housing and social protection for children in the educational process. He noted that frequent relocations due to parents migrating between centers or countries hinder school attendance. He criticized the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection for closing a center that had been working to enroll children in school, highlighting the lack of representation at the Roma Task Force, which has led to poor decisions affecting Roma refugees. He called for better communication and coordination among relevant ministries and organizations to prevent further mistakes and ensure effective support for Roma communities.

Cristina Sîrbu acknowledged the significant efforts made by Tarna Rom with teachers, emphasizing that these lessons are essential not only for Roma refugees but for all teachers across Moldova. She stressed that when teachers participate in these lessons, they are less likely to perpetuate stereotypes about Roma, thus promoting a broader understanding of discrimination. While she recognized the closure of the center as a reality that must be accepted, she argued for focusing on ensuring that every vulnerable child leaving the center receives the necessary assistance and is relocated to schools where they can continue their education. Ms. Sîrbu called for attention to additional classes to support these children, emphasizing the ongoing impact of the initiatives already developed. She urged for a pragmatic approach, acknowledging limitations while focusing on achievable goals that create a real impact.

<p>Usturoi Elena Project Assistant <i>CWS</i></p>	<p>Ms. Usturoi asked if, in the current situation, the focus is primarily on case management to monitor individual cases closely.</p>
<p>Cristina Sîrbu Co-Chair Roma Task Force, Head of Communication & Advocacy <i>INTERSOS Moldova</i></p>	<p>Cristina Sîrbu responded that when a center closes, a relocation manager is typically assigned to coordinate the process. Authorities engage with all families in the center to assess their vulnerability and determine if they need to be moved to other centers. This approach is based on family case management rather than individual case management, ensuring that each family is properly supported and continues to access the same services. She acknowledged that while the process is intended to be effective, there are often gaps between what is planned and what occurs in practice. Therefore, it is crucial to monitor the implementation of this process to ensure it is carried out correctly.</p>
<p>Usturoi Elena Project Assistant <i>CWS</i></p>	<p>Ms. Usturoi asked if any partners have conducted surveys to determine how many people from the community are seeking employment and are open to participating in training or educational programs. She emphasized the importance of understanding the community's willingness to engage in job-seeking efforts and educational opportunities.</p>
<p>Marin Alla Co-Chair Roma Task Force, General Director <i>Roma Voice Coalition</i></p>	<p>Mr. Alla emphasized the progress made by Tarna Rom in employing Roma, noting that out of 14 hired individuals, 5 are Roma. He highlighted the challenges faced due to discrimination and family responsibilities. Marin Alla requested the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection to monitor the relocation of vulnerable children from placement centers and ensure appropriate conditions. He also stressed the need to facilitate access to education and employment for Roma, suggesting collaboration with employers to convince them that Roma are capable and responsible. He highlighted the importance of cooperation among all parties involved to improve the situation of Roma.</p>
<p>Ion Duminică Executive Director <i>Porojan Association</i></p>	<p>Ion Duminică emphasized the need for a shift in refugee accommodation policy in Moldova, suggesting a move from traditional placement centers to modular housing. He argued that current centers, often resembling Soviet-style barracks, do not provide adequate comfort or decent living conditions, and that the investments done in the RAC T6 up to now will be lost. Mr. Duminică stressed that modular homes</p>

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Ivan Duminica
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could house multiple families, offering a more equitable solution for refugees from various backgrounds. He called for a long-term strategy that ensures investments in housing lead to sustainable solutions rather than repeating past mistakes, highlighting the importance of creating a humane environment for refugees.

Ms. Sîrbu asserted that investments in public institutions in the Republic of Moldova should not be considered wasted when those institutions are repurposed for educational use. She emphasized that modernizing facilities is beneficial for the population and highlights a positive development for the country. Regarding the suggestion for modular housing, Ms. Sîrbu recalled how the Republic of Moldova successfully accommodated refugees without creating refugee camps, which was recognized by the international community. She emphasized that this was a significant achievement for the country, crediting the collective efforts of the government, civil society, and ordinary citizens who opened their homes. She urged careful consideration of language when discussing these efforts, acknowledging the extraordinary work accomplished since the start of the war.

Dr. Hab. Ivan Duminică highlighted the negative impact of closing the Temporary Placement Center Testimiteanu 6 on children's education, noting a decrease in school attendance as parents become aware of the center's closure. He urged monitoring this situation to prevent demotivation among students and emphasized the need for reassurances about continued educational opportunities. Duminică criticized the current condition of the facilities calling for significant renovations. He stressed that temporary centers are not meant for permanent residence and underscored the importance of preparing for the closure, ensuring that children and families have adequate support and resources moving forward.

Ms. Sîrbu asked about the "Cash for Rent" program, mentioning that, according to the information she has, one of the conditions to benefit from this program is that at least one person in the family must be employed. She requested confirmation from Elena Taran of IOM, asking whether this information is indeed correct or if she is mistaken.

Tăran Elena
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IOM Moldova

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Ms. Taran responded that, regarding the "Cash for Rent" program, within the program of IOM, the key point when a person registers for assistance is whether they will be able to cover the rent and utility costs after the six-month financial assistance period ends. It is not necessary for the individual to be employed; for instance, a mother with many children may receive additional support from a spouse or relative. If she confirms her ability to cover these expenses after six months, that is sufficient. They do not check or verify the source of income, confirmation is based on the individual's statement.

Cristina Sîrbu highlighted the importance of having a source of income for those leaving the placement center, as many may not be relocated elsewhere. She mentioned the specific challenges faced by the Roma community, such as discrimination in housing and employment. Ms. Sîrbu noted cases where Roma individuals were explicitly denied rental opportunities. The impending closure of the center poses a risk of homelessness, especially for vulnerable families. She stressed the need for sensitive government policies to address these issues and ensure adequate support.

Mrs. Taran emphasized that awareness should not come solely from organizations, noting that she works directly with affected individuals. Although some residents in the center in Costești do not have health issues or young children, they have not taken steps to improve their living conditions, despite having been there for two years. Ms. Taran highlighted that generalizations cannot be made, and although support is offered, sometimes this help is not received.

Mr. Alla mentioned the challenges faced in providing support in the context of the war, emphasizing that sometimes this assistance is not fully effective due to the misconceptions of beneficiaries. He highlighted that, despite the end of the conflict, Roma people will continue to face integration issues. Mr. Alla called on state institutions to develop long-term policies to address the situation of refugees and stressed the importance of providing alternatives and accurate information. He noted that discrimination persists and that change requires time and ongoing effort.

<p>Tăran Elena <i>Senior Project Associate</i> <i>IOM Moldova</i></p> <p>Cristina Sîrbu Co-Chair Roma Task Force, Head of Communication & Advocacy <i>INTERSOS Moldova</i></p>	<p>Mrs. Taran emphasized the importance of addressing the specific situation of Roma families facing the imminent closure of the center. She noted that it's crucial to assess how many children are currently enrolled in school and how many parents are open to employment opportunities. By identifying at least ten interested parents, they could explore training programs and potential job placements. Ms. Taran suggested conducting interviews to understand individual willingness to work, ensuring that support is tailored to those who are ready to engage in the labor market.</p> <p>Ms. Sîrbu proposed organizing a separate meeting with organizations willing to contribute to managing the situation before the closure of RAC T6. She emphasized the need to coordinate efforts with the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection and the Ministry of Education and Research. Ms. Sirbu suggested considering interventions based on each organization's expertise, particularly in helping families find housing. While immediate solutions may not be possible, collaboration with relevant ministries and UN agencies is essential for future planning.</p>
<p><i>6.AoB</i></p> <p>Ivan Duminica Head of the Interethnic Relations Department <i>Ministry of Education and</i> <i>Research</i></p> <p>Cristina Sîrbu Co-Chair Roma Task Force, Head of Communication & Advocacy <i>INTERSOS Moldova</i></p>	<p>Dr. Hab. Ivan Duminica provided updates on recent developments concerning refugees and education. He announced that, effective August 8, 2024, modifications were made to the guidelines for Ukrainian refugees, ensuring that schools must provide educational assistants for illiterate parents, who can write requests on their behalf. He emphasized the importance of integrating Roma children and mentioned that even without documents, parents can submit copies with assistance. Additionally, meetings with parents and educational authorities focused on addressing Roma issues, ensuring warm meals, and providing extra lessons. A new online tool has been created to track Roma students, allowing for better policy implementation in their educational integration.</p> <p>Ms. Sîrbu also expressed her gratitude to everyone who participated in the activities on August 2, commemorating the victims of the Roma Holocaust. She highlighted the morning event, featuring a presentation by Ion Duminica about the Holocaust's history. Following this, a meeting took place at the</p>

	<p>Government of Moldova, attended by Minister Dan Perciun and MP Liliana Nicolaescu-Onofrei, discussing the potential declaration of August 2 as a National Memorial Day. The proposal was positively received, and Ms. Sîrbu emphasized the importance of continued efforts. The evening event at Gara Visterniceni was attended by over 70 people, was also deemed significant and moving.</p>
<p>Cristina Sîrbu Co-Chair Roma Task Force, Head of Communication & Advocacy <i>INTERSOS Moldova</i></p>	<p>Cristina Sîrbu wrapped up the meeting, thanked everybody for their active participation.</p>