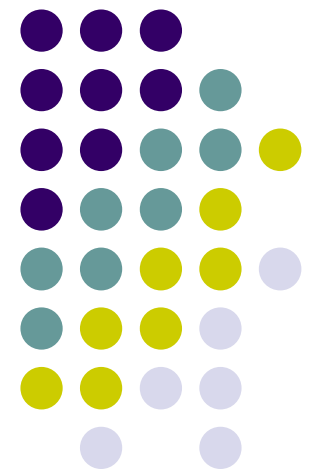
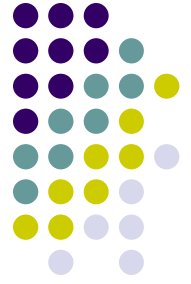


ROMA PERCEPTIONS ON GENDER

COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS
ON GENDER, ITS INFLUENCE ON
HIV VULNERABILITIES AND
POSSIBLE RESPONSES





About the project

- Objectives:
 - to explore ways in which the social environment in Roma communities defines and influences the rights, responsibilities and identities of men and women
 - to support community conversations to reduce HIV vulnerability
- Participatory approach
- April 2008 to March 2009 (research)
- September 2009 – February 2010 (interventions)

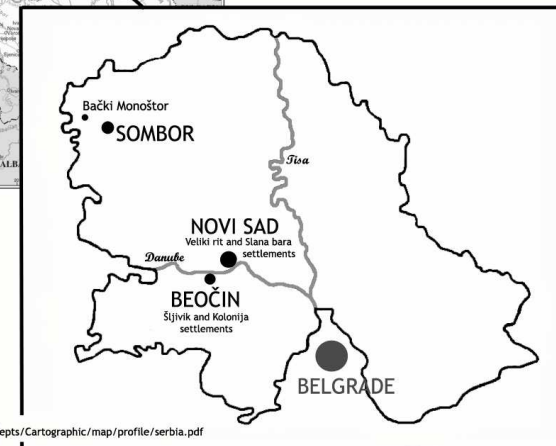


Participatory research

- Research participants: 106 Roma women and 96 men; 38 various stakeholders
- Location: Novi Sad, Beocin, and Backi Monostor (Serbia)
- Methods: focus group discussions, standard self-administered questionnaires, key-informant interviews



Location of the study:
1. Novi Sad
(Veliki rit and Slana bara settlements)
2. Beocin
(Šljivik and Kolonija settlements)
3. Sombor
(Bački Monoštor village)



Based on UN map
<http://www.un.org/Depts/Cartographic/map/profile/serbia.pdf>



Key issues

- Roles and responsibilities of Roma women and men
- Obtaining and controlling resources
- Reproductive health and risks of HIV infections
- Participation in community activities
- Attitude of men or women on gender issues
- Short-term and long-term needs and interests
- Main obstacles and strategies to overcome them



Focus group findings

- Clear gender division of roles and responsibilities among the Roma

*“Woman **sits** at home and man goes out to **work**.”*

- Men make all important decisions
- Men are expected to earn money, women to manage the money for the household
- Young Roma get married very young, girl’s chastity is highly valued
- It is common for young men to have sexual relations before marriage



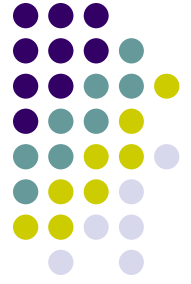
Focus group findings

- General ignorance, passivity, prejudices, fear and shame related to reproductive health
- Both Roma women and men do not consider sexually transmitted infections as a real threat to their health
- Negative attitude towards condoms and other means of contraception
- Men think that women should not be given more freedom, women are afraid of possible changes of traditional relations in Roma family

Present views of gender relations



- Male-dominant community
- A man has more rights than a woman
- Physical violence against girls and women is present and accepted
- Women have no right to make decisions.
- Men are very jealous and controlling
- Women are not allowed to speak about their problems and women are not protected by law



Future gender relations

- Agreement between women and men, joint decision making
- Respecting but not fearing the elder members of family
- Fair division of labour between men and women
- Men and women should spend their free time together
- Women should be employed
- More children should get education
- The laws on preventing domestic violence should be enforced



Interventions

- FPH and NSHC jointly developed a community conversation approach to raise awareness and identify potential areas for action to reduce HIV vulnerability
- 21 group discussions (with 130 women and 92 men) were organized with aim to raise awareness and advance Roma people's knowledge on gender roles and reproductive health, with a special focus on HIV and other STIs
- the discussions were a way of providing feedback on the process of gender transformation and their role in that process



Conclusion

- Readiness to change traditional behavior patterns exists, but only if it is connected with some of the topics closest to them, such as improving life conditions, employment, etc.;
- Interventions should adjust to the level of education and the values that Roma people hold dearest;
- Every intervention in the Roma community should be based on gender analysis and planned regarding the specific needs of women and men.

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