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REACTOR
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REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA

Submission to the
COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION (CERD)

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by the Network for Protection from Discrimination (NPD) and REACTOR

CONTACTS

**Ms. Neda Calovska, Helsinki Committee for Human Rights of the Republic of Macedonia
(MHC)**

e-mail: Neda.Calovska@mhc.org.mk tel. ++ 389 23 119 073 www.mhc.org.mk

A. INTRODUCTION

This submission was prepared by the Network for Protection from Discrimination, consisted of the Macedonian Helsinki Committee for Human Rights (MHC), Foundation Open Society Macedonia (FOOM), Association for Emancipation, Solidarity and Equality of Women (ESE), Association for Health Education and Research (HERA), Healthy Options Project Skopje (HOPS), Roma Organization for Multicultural Affirmation (ROMA S.O.S) and Coalition Sexual and Health Rights of Marginalized Communities. Network for Protection from Discrimination (NPD) is informal Network that exists from 2010. It aims to develop strategic litigation in cases of discrimination by filing cases before the Commission for Protection from Discrimination (CPD), the public prosecution, domestic and international courts. The development of domestic practice is encouraged through providing free legal assistance in strategic cases of discrimination. Additionally, exchange of information between member organizations is one of the most important aspects of CPD, which further affect and enrich the knowledge of members and promotion the legal practice in cases of discrimination. Until 2014 CPD was coordinated by FOOM, and from 2014 is coordinated by MHC.

Except CPD, contribution to this report made the organization REACTOR- Research in action, especially in the part *Unemployment and social exclusion*. This report is made for the Eighth to Tenth periodic report of the Republic of Macedonia, under Article 9, paragraph 1 of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. Regarding the information by the state party, this submission intends to present our observations and conclusions concerning all forms of racial discrimination.

B. OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Segregation of Roma (Article 3)

Findings from reports published by relevant international and domestic organizations indicate of existing segregation of Roma in the Republic of Macedonia in the field of education, but also in other societal spheres. Segregation in this since refers to the problem with ghettoization and to the problem with the high percentage of Roma children included in the special schools in the country.

The Ombudsman acknowledges ghettoization in education in each annual report and points out 4 primary schools in 4 cities¹ as examples where segregation has taken place. Also, this problem was presented before the Commission for Protection from Discrimination (CPD) by MHC², but CPD failed to establish discrimination, although they examined this issue over 3 years.

¹ "Gjorgji Sugarev" in Bitola, "Dobre Jovanovski" in Prilep, "Avram Pisevski" in Skopje and "Goce Delcev" in Shtip.

² MHC submitted a complaint to CPD against the 5 primary schools in Bitola because of reported segregation

When it comes to legislation, Republic of Macedonia does not explicitly treat segregation as a form of discrimination. The norm on catchment areas obliges municipalities to take students only from the region they are in charge of, but an exception of the rule is often applied and schools enroll students from other regions, especially Macedonian students, while they reject Roma students. Also, part of the problem is that Roma live in certain areas of the city and Roma students are enrolled in a school that is perceived as Roma. By rule, segregation in education is closely tied with poverty and inadequate education policies. Therefore, active measures are needed to address consequences of segregation.

Furthermore, Roma are often victims of discrimination and prejudices. Therefore, they do not feel safe in ethnically mixed environments and are prone to self-segregation. Respondents of a research³ view the opening of secondary school in Shuto Orizari as constructive example of “positive segregation”. The public is predominantly of the opinion that this school will allow enrollment of students from all ethnic communities, which would not necessarily lead to segregation, in that failing to thoroughly reexamine the likelihood of such developments. On the other hand, there are indications that activities are underway to transfer Roma high-school students from other secondary schools in the city to the secondary school in Shuto Orizari.

The second problem in education, as a form of segregation, is the high percentage of Roma students in the schools for children with intellectual disabilities. This problem was first recognized by the Ombudsman in 2010, who presented high percentage⁴ of Roma children included in the primary and secondary special schools. The last report on this problem is from 2014, it was made by the CPD and it shows that even though the percentage of Roma children in special schools decreased, it is still high compared to other nationalities. This problem arises especially due to the lack of knowledge of Macedonian language by Roma children, which affects the regular school enrollment, but also the poor performance during classes in regular schools.

Recommendations:

- *Legislative changes are needed in relation to segregation, with a view to treat it as form of discrimination.*
- *Legislative changes which will directly delegate responsibilities for the authorities at local and central level, as well as at school level.*
- *Measures should secure equal access to education for Roma with the same level of quality as those enjoyed by the majority. It is necessary to draft a strategy whereby ethnic*

to children of Roma ethnicity when trying to enroll in primary school. These cases indicated that access to primary schools in their area of residence was not allowed to Roma children and they were directed at the "George Sougarev" where the majority of pupils are Roma, arguing that there is no place for them in schools that primarily applied.

³³Segregation of Roma in Education in Republic of Macedonia, <http://fosm.mk/en/Home/Publications?catID=9>

⁴ 30 to 50% of the students

composition of the school district or the municipality will be adequately reflected in the composition of school classes.

- *Active measures are needed on education and awareness campaign among Roma parents concerning the importance of education, including a campaign on the negative consequences from segregation.*

2. Domestic violence and violence against women (Article 5- b)

Republic of Macedonia has opened four regional centers for victims of domestic violence, and in the period from 2010 to 2012, 12 Roma women - victims of domestic violence were accommodated in these centers. Based on such data and data available by the NGO's, it can be concluded that the number of registered victims of domestic violence does not correspond to the real number of Roma women who suffer domestic violence. In the last years there is a trend of decreasing the number of registered cases of domestic violence suffered by Roma women, but also Albanian woman, which was stated in the National Strategy for Prevention and Protection from domestic violence 2012-2015. One of the main reasons for the decreased number of Roma women as users of services in the area of domestic violence is the insufficient and inadequate accommodation of women victims of domestic violence, lack of information and fear of women of Roma ethnic community, the difficulty of access to the courts due to belonging to the most marginalized ethnic community. At the same time, there is institutional discrimination towards marginalized women victims of domestic violence. A good example of this is the rejection of women below 18 years of age in the shelter centers, which creates problems for young Roma women, victims of domestic violence, who were married before they were of age.

In 2014, a new Law on Prevention, Combating and Protection from Domestic Violence was adopted. Despite the general remarks to the Law for no appropriate protection of women victims of domestic violence, until now there is no new strategy which will include measures to improve the situation of Roma women victims of domestic violence.

Recommendations:

- *There is a need for measures to be taken for informing the Roma women about the protection from domestic violence*
- *Roma women below 18 years of age, who are victims of domestic violence and were married before they were of age must be included in the shelter centers*

3. Discrimination of Roma ethnic community on border crossings (Article 5- d (i, ii))

The Committee has raised the issue of ethnic profiling of Roma people on state border crossings, which are subjected to discriminatory and humiliating treatment. In violation of the right to liberty of movement, guaranteed under article 12 of the Covenant, citizens of Roma ethnic community are being denied to cross the border by officials under numerous excuses, including that they are not in hold of enough financial means for their stay in the desired country, they lack

a letter of guarantee or other issues. The problem, which was firstly reported in 2011, persists for several years now, even after the Constitutional Court's decision to annul article 37 paragraph 1 of the Law on travel documents which limited the right to free movement to citizens who want to leave the country and was unconstitutional. This systematic, discriminatory practice has been raised as an issue by several civil society organizations, but the State remains deaf to their alerts.

A significant number of citizens of Roma ethnic community have submitted complaints to the Ombudsman, MHC and other non-governmental organizations working on Roma issues about being discriminated at a state border crossing when they intend to travel. Some of the victims have been directly told by police officials that they are considered potential asylum seekers in European Union countries and that there is an order by the "superiors" not to let them cross the border. This however cannot in any circumstance be an acceptable response because a) border police officials cannot in any way know or confirm that the person is a potential asylum seekers and b) even if they are, the right to seek asylum belongs to everyone and cannot be limited in any way. The conduct itself is highly inconvenient and humiliating for the victims, since only Roma citizens are usually picked out from a full bus, are held in for questioning for a longer period, after which they might not even continue the trip. In 2014, MHC conducted situation testing that proved the racial profiling towards Roma, which is submitted as evidence in the court proceeding initiated in order to determine the racial profiling to the Roma community. Also, more than 20 individual court cases have been initiated and there are two effective court decision which confirm that the act of restricting the right to free movement on border crossings to citizens of Roma ethnic community is discriminatory.

Recommendations:

- *Officials of the border police must be trained and educated in which circumstances they can limit the constitutional right of citizens to freely leave the country.*
- *Court decisions must be implemented and the discriminatory practice discontinued.*
- *Citizens of the Roma ethnic community must be well informed and educated of their rights, but at the same time of the requirements for traveling to EU Schengen countries.*

4. Social rights (Article 5- e)

The analysis of the households that are most affected by poverty, material deprivation and unemployment (or households that are faced with multiple social exclusion), show that most affected are Roma households- 37,7%. The number of Roma households that live in the risk of poverty, is the highest- 61,3%, in comparison with the other ethnic groups: Turks- 45,6%, Albanians- 34,3% and Macedonians- 16,9%. Moreover, the households in which everybody is unemployed, are mostly found among the Roma ethnic group- 55,5%, and majority of the Roma people in our country, about 69%, are facing the lack of basic components of decent life.⁵

⁵ Material deprivation, poverty and social exclusion in Macedonia Publisher: Foundation "Friedrich Ebert" - Skopje Faculty of Philosophy, Skopje, Maja Gerovska Mitev 2012

In the part of the use of social financial help, whose rate is at the amount of 2.334,00 MKD (42\$) (which is about 8% of the minimum monthly household expenses, determined at 32,000 denars (581\$) in 2013⁶) and for every family member, maximum for five members, is raised for 0,37% per family member, is concluded that this is mostly used by the Roma households.

One of the biggest problems that Roma people face with in the process of realizations of the rights of social protection are the non-registration of these people in the Register of Births⁷ and the inability to acquire the status of citizens of Republic of Macedonia, which mostly affects the children.⁸

Very important part of the social exclusion is the care for the rights of the children. The highest number of the children on the streets is Roma children, but the exact number cannot be defined. According to the information by the Ministry of Labor and Social policy this number is 650 in the period from the year 2005 up to date, but according to the reports by the Ombudsman, the findings of Helsinki Committee and the media information, it can be concluded that this number is much higher.⁹

The care for these children is provided through daily centers in Bitola, Skopje and Prilep. However, the daily centers are just temporary and they do not represent a permanent solution of the street children's problem. In the daily centers children acquire the basic hygiene habits, they are taught and encouraged to start primary education. After they leave the center, they are again faced with the existential problems of their parents, which make the problem continue.

In the Strategy for Roma people in the Republic of Macedonia 2014- 2020¹⁰, as priority section, there is no social protection. This shows the ignorance of the state to undertake further strengthened and efficient measures and policies to improve the rights and the social and economic status of Roma people, as well as to provide comprehensive systems for social protection, which will provide minimum funds for dignified life.¹¹

⁶According to research by Macedonian Unions Association in 2013

⁷ According to the Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare from 2011 has been implemented action for identification of Roma people that are not recorded in the registers of births. 441 persons were identified as persons who are not registered in the registry of births and for 32 of them were conducted a DNA analysis

⁸Helsinki Committee for human rights of the Republic of MacedoniaPublication: "Between reality and implementation of the National Strategy for Roma Inclusion", February 2014 http://www.mhc.org.mk/system/uploads/redactor_assets/documents/629/Romi_Analiza_Helsinki.pdf

⁹ Helsinki Committee for human rights of the Republic of MacedoniaPublication: "Between reality and implementation of the National Strategy for Roma Inclusion", February 2014 http://www.mhc.org.mk/system/uploads/redactor_assets/documents/629/Romi_Analiza_Helsinki.pdf

¹⁰Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare<http://www.mtsp.gov.mk/dokumenti-642e295b-69e3-4291-acb1-2ce6beb8cdd8.nsp>

¹¹Provided in the Declaration on improving the status and rights of the Roma, adopted at the session held on 01.04.2011, published in Official Gazette, No. 42/11

An issue of high concern is the retroactive application of the Rules on the Manner of Determining Income, Property and Property Rights of Households, adopted on January 26th, 2015 by the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy. These rules foresee that “*Family income shall be considered if the funds are transferred through quick money transfer*”. In 2015, the Centers for Social Protection ruled decisions by which the financial social assistance was suspended for the families for the previous year, 2014, due to a confirmed “illegal” payment i.e. income realized through quick money transfer. The retroactive application of laws and other regulations is prohibited by the Constitution of Republic of Macedonia.¹²

Recommendations:

- *To take measures for precise determining of the number of people who do not have personal documents, to enable facilitation and acceleration of the procedure for registration in the Register of Births and allocate financial support for conducting DNK analysis.*
- *Take measures to support and help people that are permanently dependent on social help and to increase the amount of social assistance according to the number of family members, instead of limiting the increase only to five family members.*
- *The state must take urgent action to collect data for the number of Roma children who are on the street and to provide adequate institutional, financial and technical opportunities for care and accommodation of the children from the street, through adequate programs for their re- socialization and direct work with their parents.*

5. Unemployment and social exclusion (Article 5- e(i))

The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD) in its previous concluding observations expressed their concern “in regards to the Law on Labor Relations, in particular on the measures adopted to combat discrimination in the workplace and to ensure the equal effective enjoyment of labor rights for all, including women, Roma and members of other ethnic minorities¹³”.

Macedonian’s State Statistical Office does not have any available data in regards to the unemployment/inactivity rates of Roma, Albanian and other ethnic minorities, thus making it challenging to determine the factual situation. In view of marginalized women, previous research indicates that Roma and Albanian women are least knowledgeable when it comes to gender based discrimination hence making them most susceptible to experience discrimination¹⁴. In Macedonia, women are 4.28 times less likely to participate in the labor market compared to Roma women who are 8.33 times less likely to participate in the labor market¹⁵. Women in

¹² The Constitution of the Republic of Macedonia article 52 paragraph 4 :...() laws and other regulations cannot have retroactive effect, except in cases when it is more convenient for citizens

¹³ CERD (2007) concluding observations - <http://goo.gl/mCGZl>

¹⁴ Reactor – Research in Action (2010), Women in the Macedonian Economy, pg. 12 - <http://goo.gl/tbgK2n>

¹⁵ Reactor – Research in Action (2012) Finding the key to the glass door: Demystifying the reasons for women’s low participation of the labor market. pg. 50 - <http://goo.gl/pLGGsG>

Macedonian economy¹⁶, a national study suggests that women from Suto Orizari (predominantly Roma women) would most likely work for the lowest amount of 11.000 denars (\$196) followed by women from Tetovo (predominantly ethnic Albanian Women) who would work for 12.800 (\$228) denars. Ethnic Macedonian women would work for the highest amount of 15.000 denars (\$267) in Strumica and 17.800 denars (\$318) in Skopje, Karpos. The study indicates that women from Suto Orizari most likely are unemployed and have difficulties in paying for utilities and are most likely to only have primary educational attainment.

Research suggests that in Macedonia, ethnicity is an important deterrent influencing person's position on the labor market. A "Work conditions and work– life balance: A gender analysis"¹⁷, highlighted few factors which indicate that ethnic minorities are not equally treated in Macedonia's labor market.

Namely, of those surveyed, ethnic Macedonians more often register as unemployed (at the State Employment Agency) in comparison with ethnic Albanians, where 85%¹⁸ of the Macedonian respondents are registered, and 61% of the Albanians. This can be related to the (discriminatory) requirements set in the Law for employment and insurance¹⁹. Furthermore, Macedonians declared higher earnings compared to ethnic Albanians, corresponding to 8%²⁰ of Macedonians who have received a significant increase of salary in comparison to only 4% of Albanians. Additionally, 39%²¹ of ethnic Macedonians indicated previously receiving a slight increase, compared to only 16% of Albanians.

In addition, the average amount that Macedonians would work for is 11.600²² denars (\$207) in comparison to ethnic Albanians at 9.750 denars (\$174). Also ethnic minorities were more likely to believe that there are no available employment (job) opportunities in comparison to ethnic Macedonians. In regards to experiencing problems at the work place, ethnic Albanians are more often threatened to be laid-off (19%) compared to ethnic Macedonians (9%)²³.

Recommendations:

- *More measures should be predicted to decrease the unemployment rate of Roma people.*
- *Special measures should address the employment of Roma women, instead of general measures directed at employing only a small and limited number of Roma people. At*

¹⁶ Reactor – Research in Action (2010), Women in the Macedonian Economy, pg. 12

¹⁷Reactor – Research in Action (2015), Work conditions and work-life balance: A gender analysis

¹⁸Ibid

¹⁹Law for employment and insurance in case of unemployment (2012), Official Gazette, No. 153, from 06.12.12 <http://goo.gl/woZfJc>

²⁰Reactor – Research in Action (2015), Work conditions and work-life balance: A gender analysis

²¹Ibid

²²Ibid

²³Ibid

present there is a lack of measures, activities and programs to address other ethnic minorities, specifically women from diverse cultural backgrounds.

6. The right to housing (MHC) (Article 5- e (iii))

Housing is the biggest problem for members of the Roma community in the Republic of Macedonia, as mentioned in the analysis “Between implementation and reality of the National strategy for inclusion of Roma people”²⁴. Even though until 2011 the State did not take any direct measures and actions to overcome the problem, through the law for dealing with illegal buildings as well as the adoption of other regulations in this field, a process for improvement has been started. First, there is allocation of state owned apartments to Roma families as a vulnerable category. There is also a special support program for improving living conditions and infrastructure in Roma settlements and the opportunity for legalization of illegally constructed buildings. However, it is worrying that there is no data on the number of Roma families who have missed the deadline for submitting a request for legalization of illegally constructed buildings. The construction of social housing is slow and only a small number of Roma families have received social housing. The resources allocated for improving infrastructure in Roma settlements are not enough for a tangible effect. An obstacle for legalization is the fact that some of the Roma settlements are located on territory that according to urban planning is not designated for housing. In the meantime the municipalities are slow to align city planning with the situation at hand. Some municipalities do not keep statistics on the number of Roma who have submitted claims, and some municipalities still haven't adopted local plans/strategies for housing. In June 2015 the Municipality Council of Kavardarci has unanimously voted for dislocation of Roma settlement on the territory of the Municipality of Kavadraci. Namely, the Council allocated around \$27000 for eight Roma families with residence in the same municipality and the others are going to be returned from the place they came from.²⁵

Recommendations:

- *All municipalities should keep a data base, recording the number of Roma families who have submitted or have not submitted requests for legalization of illegally constructed buildings.*
- *Municipalities should adopt special programs/strategies for housing, and in the municipalities with a significant number of Roma settlements, special programs for Roma housing should be adopted.*
- *Municipalities should make further efforts to align detailed urban planning that conflict with illegally built facilities owned by the Roma.*
- *The state should accelerate the construction and allocation of social housing for it is vulnerable categories of citizens.*

²⁴<http://www.mhc.org.mk/publications/192#.VZrVbhsipdg>

²⁵<http://mojotgrad.com/index.php/tikvesija/item/2648-dislokacija-na-romskata-diva-naselba-vo-kavadarci>

- *Raising the funds for support of Roma housing, especially the allocation of funds for infrastructure construction activities in the settlements where the majority of citizens are Roma*
- *Socially disadvantaged Roma people should get free access to the health network owned by public companies.*
- *Extending the deadlines for applying for legalization.*

7. Health protection of Roma drug users (Article 5- e, (iv))

Roma people who use drugs in Macedonia, just as most of the Roma people as a whole, live in conditions of an extremely marginalized social position and poverty, which in return, limits their opportunities for realizing their right to social and health protection. According to the research on the inclusiveness of the Macedonian society²⁶ Roma were the most unwanted group and drug users were the second least-wanted group in Macedonia. The combination of these two identities leads to additional marginalization that specifically affects Roma drug users. Geographical accessibility of health services is of particular importance for people with low income and people from the minorities when selecting a health service.²⁷ Even though the grant from the Global Fund for the fight against HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria foresaw the opening of a drug dependence treatment program in Shuto Orizari (municipality mostly populated with Roma) on behalf of the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Macedonia, no such center has been opened to this day. Not opening a centre for the treatment of drug dependencies in Municipality Shuto Orizari due to disapproval by the local population is against the law, because there is no legal obligation to request consent from the local population when opening a health institution.²⁸ According to recommendations from the WHO for minimum preconditions for the realization of a treatment, the pharmacological treatment for dependence should be widely spread and may include distribution of therapy in primary health protection facilities.²⁹

The question for drugs in the Roma community was also mentioned in the National Drug Strategy 2006-2012 as an insufficiently analyzed phenomenon³⁰, which points out to the treatment of the question of Roma people and how they are affected by the drugs in the Republic of Macedonia. The strategy points out to the increased number of persons from the Roma

²⁶ Open Society Foundation- How inclusive is Macedonian society, 2009 Skopje.

²⁷ Improvement of the right to access to social and health services for Roma people using drugs- This was also shown in the research carried out in 2010 among drug using people in the Municipality of Shuto Orizari, via which it was established that the lack of funds and the distance of dependence treatment centers from the places of living represent a barrier for persons from the Roma community to decide to get treatment for their drug dependence disorders (Dimitrievski 2011).

²⁸The following example is provided as a comparison for the relationship between local and national authorities when it comes to access to health services of persons from the Roma community, living on the territory of the Municipality of Shuto Orizari. There is no gynecologist for years in Shuto Orizari now, and the local community has been sending demands for resolving this issue, thus providing uninterrupted access of women to gynecological care, but in this case the opinion of the local population was not respected and up to the completion of this analysis, no gynecologist operates on the territory of the Municipality Shuto Orizari.

²⁹ World Health Organization, Guidelines for the Psychosocially Assisted Pharmacological Treatment of Opioid Dependence

³⁰ Ministry of Health, National Drugs Strategy of the Republic of Macedonia (2006-2012), page 9.

community, who use drugs, but still, only stating the fact is not sufficient but specific steps should be taken to enable drug dependence treatment for people from the Roma community. In the last National Drug strategy 2012-2016 the issue of Roma drug users disappeared without any reasoning or any evident measure undertaken in order to challenge the previously noted situation.

There is a trend of increased number of children who use drugs and the age when they begin with drug use is decreasing. Specifically complex is the position of Roma children who use drugs, who mostly use heroin. The realization of their rights to social and health protection depends on their parents/guardians. According to researches, the age of Roma children in the Republic of Macedonia starting the use of drugs ranges from 8 to 12.³¹ Roma children who use drugs do not attend school and are forced to beg and steal in order to provide existence for themselves and for their families, and to also be able to buy heroin. The biggest institutional barrier for drug using children is the impossibility to treat their addiction because there are no appropriate programs for treating drug addicted persons below 16 years of age in Macedonia, and the conditions for treatment for persons aged 16 to 18 are also very complex.

According to the legislation, there is an obstacle for children under the age of 18 to access dependence treatments. The concern regarding the lack of opportunities for rehabilitation of persons under the age of 18 is also expressed by the Committee on the Rights of the Child, so in its recommendations to the Republic of Macedonia it recommends the development of preventive measures and services for the rehabilitation of children – drug users.³²

Recommendations:

- *The State must take urgent action to eliminate legal and institutional barrier for children who use drugs to access programs for drug related treatment, rehabilitation and re-socialization.*
- *The state also have to take steps to collect data on drug use among Roma and conduct studies on the specific needs of Roma children who use drugs in order to increase their access to drug related treatment programs.*

8. Sexual and reproductive health for Roma women (Article 5- e (iv))

Contrary to the commitment for providing and guaranteeing the right of health, medical care, social security and social services regardless of race, color or national or ethnic origin, the Republic of Macedonia is failing in practice to ensure equal access to health services for sexual and reproductive health for women from the Roma community in Macedonia.

³¹ Dimitrievski, Improvement of the right to access to social and health services to Roma people using drugs, pg. 26

³²United Nations, Recommendations of the Committee for the rights of the child within UN delivered to the Government of the Republic of Macedonia based on the second periodical report and initial reports, pgh. 79

According to the statistical data from the national census conducted in 2002, in the Republic of Macedonia there are 26 742 Roma women, most of which are living in the municipality of Shuto Orizari. From a total of 8701 women living in Shuto Orizari, 6719 are Roma³³. In Shuto Orizari there is no GP gynecological cabinet for almost 8 years, except for a few-month period from mid 2013 to February 2014. From February 2014, women who live in this municipality are again without GP gynecologist and they do not have access to health services for sexual and reproductive health.

In the “Program for active health protection of mothers and children” of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia for 2014, whose aim is continuously to improve the health of children and women of childbearing age in terms of reducing infant and maternal mortality, there was a measure envisaged for offering gynecological services at an ordination in Shuto Orizari once a week in the period from January to December 2014³⁴. According to the community score card assessment conducted by the Roma women and HERA, for determination of the conditions of health protection and health rights of women in Shuto Orizari during pregnancy and after delivery, at that ordination Roma women can receive free counseling, ultrasonography and vaginal examination and measurement of blood pressure, but cannot make microbiological examinations and Pap test, receive a prescription for treatment, get a referral for further laboratory tests or hospital.³⁵ The same survey found that the ordination started working 6 months after the deadline for starting and in the same gynecological cabinet, services are offered by 4 different gynecologists who rotate and cannot constantly monitor the health conditions of their patients. This temporary measure by the Ministry of Health did not solve the longstanding problem that Roma women face and did not provide accessibility and availability of GP gynecologist in the municipality who can comprehensively and regularly offer services in primary health care for women of childbearing age.

In the Program for active health protection of mothers and children of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia for 2014, 1900 swabs and microbiological tests were provided for pregnant women – recipients of social welfare. Also the Program provided exemption from participation for microbiological swabs for all pregnant women from families with minimum monthly wage and/or unemployed women. Given the socio-economic conditions in which Roma women live, many of them meet the terms for using these free tests. According to the abovementioned community score card assessment conducted by the Roma women and HERA in Shuto Orizari during pregnancy and after delivery, it was determined that no Roma woman was informed of this measure by her GP gynecologist and utilization of this measure by the interviewed women from research is 0%.³⁶

In the Program for active health protection of mothers and children of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia for 2015, the budget line for offering gynecological services once a week in Shuto Orizari was reduced by 400% compared to 2014. Of the predicted 480,000 denars

³³Census of population, households and dwellings in the Republic of Macedonia <http://www.stat.gov.mk/publikacii/knigaX.pdf>

³⁴ Programme for active health protection of mothers and children of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia for 2014, Gazette of RM 15/2014 from 27.01.2014

³⁵Third community score card http://hera.org.mk/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Treta_karta_zaednica_SO.pdf

³⁶ Programme for active health protection of mothers and children of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia for 2014, Gazette of RM 15/2014 from 27.01.2014

(8.693\$) in 2014, the state reduced the budget for this measure to 120.000 denars (2.173\$) annually for 2015³⁷.

The situation at the national level is no better than at the local level in the municipality of Shuto Orizari. Access to gynecological services of Roma women at national level is inadequate. There are no gynecological clinics in the rural areas and smaller urban areas, and especially in Roma communities³⁸.

Lack of access to gynecological services leads to greater sexual and reproductive health risks of Roma women. Namely, according to ESE's research³⁹, 21% of Roma women had no gynecological examination during pregnancy. Data from the field work of HERA and Roma SOS show that 50% of Roma women face certain barriers in accessing gynecological services as illegal collection of services that are covered by health insurance and low quality of health services received.⁴⁰ The community score card⁴¹ showed that more 76% of Roma women pay for services at their GP gynecologists who are free of charge according to the policies of the Health Insurance Fund. The rate of contraceptive usage among Roma women is particularly low due to lack of awareness by the GP gynecologists and because of high prices of contraceptives. According to the ESE's research in 2013 almost 26% of Roma women had not used any form of contraception.

Additionally, there are several cases of discrimination towards Roma women in which the GP gynecologists refuse to register Roma patients under the excuse that they have many patients or that they have filled the quota, although current legislation does not impose quotas or patient limits.

Recommendations:

- *The state should take steps to find a long-term solution for providing GP gynecological clinic in Suto Orizari in order to overcome the current situation.*
- *The state should adopt regulations and measures that will eliminate illegal charges by the GP gynecologists that women of childbearing are facing.*
- *The state should adopt regulations and measures that will ensure full free services during pregnancy for women who are socially excluded, with a particular focus on Roma women.*

³⁷ Programme for active health protection of mothers and children of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia for 2014, Gazette of RM 194/2014 from 25.12.2014

³⁸ Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, Institute for Human Rights „Ludwig Boltzmann“, Secretariat for European Affairs, On the way to EU: Contribution from the civic society for the creation of social inclusion policy in RM, 2008

³⁹ ESE, Pavlovski B, Health, health care and influences over the health of the Roma in RMacedonia, 2008 available at http://esem.org.mk/pdf/Publikaciji/Ostanati/Zdravjeto_zdravstvena_zastita_i_vlijanija_vrz_zdravjeto_kaj_Romite_vo_RM.pdf

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