



**ROMA REFUGEES  
FROM UKRAINE:  
A NEEDS ASSESSMENT**

**SODI!**



**Aktion  
Deutschland Hilft**  
Germany's Relief Coalition

**RGDTS - PHIREN AMENCA INTERNATIONAL NETWORK FOR  
SOLIDARITÄTSDIENST INTERNATIONAL (SODI)**





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# 1. INTRODUCTION

Since the arrival of Roma refugees from Ukraine in February 2022 a number of non-governmental organizations have been offering assistance to Ukrainian Roma refugees in Hungary. Already from February 2022, the Roma NGO RGDTS - Phiren Amenca International Network (Phiren Amenca) started to provide humanitarian assistance to Roma refugees from Ukraine who had fled the Russian aggression.

In the course of its involvement and in light of the deplorable fact that the war against Ukraine will continue into 2023, it became obvious to Phiren Amenca that further humanitarian assistance will be necessary and that further assistance to Roma refugees from Ukraine in Hungary will be needed. In order to identify the needs and the possibilities for future interventions, Phiren Amenca decided to conduct a needs assessment, focusing on women and children, since they constitute the overwhelming majority of the refugees.

This needs assessment - based on interviews and focus group discussions complemented with desk research - was carried out between October and December 2022. The Roma women who were the focus of the study have largely been beneficiaries of humanitarian aid offered by Phiren Amenca. Therefore, this assessment should not be considered as representative for all Roma refugees from Ukraine in Hungary. Rather, it sheds light on the needs of the families in the study and does not allow for its conclusions to be generalized.

This report is the result of a process designed specifically to understand the needs of Hungarian-speaking Roma women and their families who sought refuge in Hungary. The research was coordinated by Phiren Amenca. Although needs assessment concentrated on Roma women, the experiences of our colleagues serving this community have also been taken into consideration. Women were chosen as the focus based on the assumption that men would likely not have been able to cross the border into Hungary. This assumption has proven to be only partially accurate, since many husbands of women who fled to Hungary were already working in Hungary before the war started. Further, we assumed that a vast majority of adult women would be parents. This has largely held true.

As such, the female respondents in this needs assessment should also be viewed as representatives of nuclear families.

The report is structured as follows: section 2 lays out the research methodology of the needs assessment. Section 3 describes the recent situation of the Roma in Ukraine. Section 4 considers the situation of Ukrainian refugees, focusing on Ukrainian Roma refugees in Hungary. Section 5 presents the results of a survey of Ukrainian Roma refugee women in and around Budapest, then Section 6 moves on to share the insights gained from two focus group sessions with Roma refugees in Hungary. Recommendations for future aid and programs constitute the final section.

## 2. METHODOLOGY

The needs assessment has been both quantitative and qualitative in its methods. Access to four groups of Roma refugees was obtained by Phiren Amenca. Almost all respondents were Hungarian speakers from the Transcarpathian region of Ukraine. These groups were concentrations of nuclear families living in four accommodation spaces in and near Budapest. As such, meetings were held in four different sites, namely:

- I. a pensioners' club in Budapest District VII largely with residents of various accommodations in and nearby Budapest;
- II. a refugee hostel 25 km NW of the city centre, with its residents;
- III. a flat in Budapest District VIII, with the families renting the flat;
- IV. a container home in Budapest District XVI, with its occupants.

In all four locations adult women (and some men) were asked to answer a standardized questionnaire. The questionnaire explored the social and economic situation of the women and their families in Ukraine, the circumstances of leaving the country, their legal and family status in Hungary, the current educational situation of the children in Hungary, access to services, and experience of discrimination in Hungary.

The questionnaire was designed to gather background information and offer a quantitative measurement of needs. The unit of analysis was the individual respondent and her (sometimes his) family, especially children. The questionnaires were filled out with the heads or co-heads of 30 families with the assistance of Phiren Amenca experts who were of Roma origin. This was done in order to inspire confidence and trust in the respondents. It should be noted that the experts had been involved in delivering humanitarian aid to the respondents or supporting them in their everyday life in Hungary and they were not seen as having any institutional (e.g., governmental) bias. Much data was obtained during the filling of the questionnaires when experts succeeded in taking notes of comments given by the respondents while recording their answers, supplementing the survey with qualitative data.

In the two larger groups (I. and II. above) we conducted focus group sessions to gain a deeper understanding of the families' needs and challenges. Approximately 20 people participated in each session, as several persons who were not primary respondents of the questionnaire took part. These discussions served to provide perspective and depth, exploring how the respondents have experienced and interpreted life in Hungary as Roma refugees. The focus group discussions supplemented the quantitative data collected in the survey.

A round of interviews with aid workers with intense field experience cooperating with Roma refugees has also been launched. Where appropriate, observations from these interviews will be referenced in the report.

The combination of methods widened the scope of the assessment, resulting in information about the following topics:

- reasons for leaving Ukraine,
- social and economic situation in Ukraine
- experience of arriving in Hungary,
- access to services in Hungary (housing, education, legal paperwork, etc.),
- needs that may have been overlooked,

We faced a number of challenges while conducting the needs assessment, including the need for our subjects to tend to their children while working with us, a short lead-in period for the use of the questionnaires, and the use of spaces not ideal for hosting focus group sessions. Despite this, the needs assessment phase went smoothly, thanks to the great efforts of the participants and our research colleagues.

Inasmuch other Roma refugee groups in Hungary are in similar situations, we can assume that many of our findings will hold consistently. But the application of program recommendations (as described in the last section of this report) must be preceded and accompanied by local assessments.

The needs assessment has provided valuable insight into the current lives of the Roma refugee families. It is centred on the experiences and perspectives of the women in our subject group, who were kind and open enough to share their views and the stories of their lives. Some less than obvious issues and challenges were uncovered, while some of our initial assumptions were questioned. The experiences the respondents shared with us have directly resulted in a series of program recommendations.

The execution of the needs assessment was coordinated by Frank Thomas Zsigó, Assistant Professor at the Faculty of Social Sciences, Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest. RGDTS-Phiren Amenca co-workers conducted the interviews and focus groups while Stephan Müller from Central Council of German Sinti and Roma provided advice on the questionnaire.

The report was written by Frank T. Zsigó and Stephan Müller.

### 3. THE SITUATION OF THE ROMA IN UKRAINE

Roma have lived on the territory of present-day Ukraine since the 15th century. According to the 2001 census, 47.600 people identified themselves as Roma however, it is estimated that up to 400.000 Roma live in Ukraine. (Tsviliy 2022). Roma live in almost all parts of the country with the largest group living in the Transcarpathian oblast: 14.000 people according to the census; 70.000 estimated by the NGO Chirikli.

The Transcarpathian region was once part of Hungary, and a sizeable Hungarian minority still lives there today. The history of the region continues to determine the language, culture, and life of its residents today, including Roma. The majority of Transcarpathian Roma speaks Hungarian as their first or second language, and many children attend Hungarian-language schools, albeit often segregated ones.<sup>1</sup> Also, many of the Roma living in this region have Hungarian citizenship (alongside Ukrainian citizenship) and thus hold two passports, which is also the case for members of other ethnic groups in Transcarpathia. The Roma families in this needs assessment were all from the Transcarpathian region and deeply influenced by Hungarian culture (particularly language).

Discrimination against Roma in Ukraine is widespread. Although there are regional differences, a large proportion of Roma have been excluded from mainstream society and lived in segregated, often informal settlements without access to infrastructure. Many were unemployed already before the war, lacked vocational training, often had no documents, and faced discrimination in all areas of everyday life such as school, health care, the workplace or simply on the street. In 2015, according to a report, 24% of Roma respondents had not attended school, 16% had only completed primary school and 37% had not finished secondary school. 63% of respondents were unemployed - among women the unemployment rate was as high as 83% - and another 22% worked only intermittently (REYN 2015).

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<sup>1</sup> Many Roma children, in particular in Transcarpathia, are being sent to segregated schools with only Roma pupils or overwhelmingly Roma pupils. These schools are in general of a lower quality.

Roma organizations in Ukraine have tried to raise public awareness of the violent attacks on Roma which have occurred in western Ukraine during the war. The organizations have called on the responsible authorities to investigate and prosecute these acts of violence. The number of attacks is unknown, as not all attacks are reported and verifiable statements about possible attacks are not always made. In 2018 and 2019, several attacks against Roma were recorded, primarily in Western Ukraine. Law enforcement and juridical authorities often do not act with due consistency (ERRC 2020).

Discrimination, deprivation and poverty, low levels of education and employment, and pervasive violence against the Roma are indicators of extreme social exclusion and the results of centuries of antigypsyism. This is compounded by the new hardships brought on by the war. As such, the environment Ukrainian Roma encounter outside Ukraine, while not free of significant challenges, may seem peaceable in comparison. For many Roma who have remained in Ukraine, access to food and other necessary non-food items is becoming more difficult and in several cases, they do not receive from the aid from which they are supposed to benefit because of their Roma origin. This may motivate even more Roma to leave Ukraine.

Experience of discrimination in Ukraine is likely to affect the experience of life since escaping to Hungary. Cases of discrimination against Roma by authorities and private individuals have also been reported during the war. In the Transcarpathian region, for example, it was reported that a police officer had called for Roma to be expelled from the region or to find other countries to host them (Markusová 2022).

## 4. REFUGEES FROM UKRAINE

In early March 2022, the European Union activated the Temporary Protection Directive for refugees from Ukraine, which is initially valid for one year and determines, among other things, entitlements to accommodation and access to the labour market<sup>2</sup> however, it doesn't address two specific situations which concern a portion of the refugees, namely dual citizenship, and lacking documents. The Temporary Protection Directive provides the framework while the actual implementation is up to the individual Member States of the European Union.

By the end of December 2022, more than 7.8 million people have been forced to leave Ukraine and were recorded in other European countries, while others who were expelled live as Internally Displaced Persons within Ukraine. The exact number of Roma who have fled Ukraine is not known, because no ethnic data was collected, but it can be assumed that up to 100.000 Roma escaped from the war. This would mean that about a quarter of the Roma population of Ukraine has fled (EU Neighbours East 2022). It is equally difficult to determine how many Roma have found longer-term refuge in the respective host countries.

Since men between the ages of 18 and 60 are only allowed to leave Ukraine under certain conditions, mainly women and children have fled, and their special protection needs as refugees must be guaranteed.

There are obvious differences between individual countries in terms of their willingness and capacities to receive and to support Ukrainian refugees. It seems that some countries have facilitated, if not directly supported, onward travel to other countries.

**Table 1: Refugees from Ukraine in selected European countries<sup>3</sup>**

	Border crossings from Ukraine	Refugees registered for temporary protection or similar scheme	Refugees recorded in country
<b>Hungary</b>	1.972.885	33.218	33.218
<b>Romania</b>	1.737.719	102.039	106.629
<b>Slovakia</b>	1.047.890	105.124	105.370
<b>Poland</b>	8.506.801	1.546.354	1.546.354
<b>Moldova</b>	732.939	N/A	100.494
<b>Germany</b>	N/A	1.021.667	1.021.667
<b>Czech Republic</b>	N/A	473.736	474.731

In recent years, the Hungarian government has granted Hungarian citizenship to about one million people in neighbouring countries. Therefore, many people who have fled Ukraine were not eligible to register in EU Member States under the temporary protection regime, since for them Hungarian citizenship takes precedence over Ukrainian citizenship.

Before the war, those holding a Hungarian passport could travel freely and work within the EU, an opportunity many had taken advantage of. Persons with such dual citizenship are neither entitled to protection under the EU's Temporary Protection Directive, nor can they apply for asylum. In countries such as Germany and the Czech Republic the dual citizenship of some Roma was used for campaigns to denounce Roma as not being war refugees, but to have come to host countries only to abuse the social assistance available to refugees. The authorities in Czech Republic even tried to reject Roma refugees with dual citizenship and send them to Hungary.

Because of this reason, there is a large discrepancy between the number of refugees arriving in Hungary and the number of refugees from Ukraine who were granted temporary protection<sup>4</sup>. Since Ukrainian refugees with dual Hungarian-Ukrainian citizenship might not be registered under Temporary Protection, the actual number of refugees from Ukraine living in Hungary now must be higher.

Not holding key documents is another issue that complicates the delivery

<sup>3</sup> Source: UNHCR 2022a

<sup>4</sup> According to UNHCR data, by 27 December 2022, 1.972.885 people from Ukraine arrived in Hungary, but only 33.218 were registered under Temporary Protection (source:UNHCR 2022a).

of assistance to refugees. Many Roma from Ukraine either do not have any documents or do not have all the necessary documents. According to information from the European Roma Rights Centre (ERRC), Ukrainian border authorities have prevented Roma from leaving the country because they did not have documents (ERRC 2022a). However, this is not the case for participants in our research, and other Hungarian NGOs working with Roma refugees have not faced this situation either.

On the other hand, tens of thousands of Roma who had fled have received support. With the exception of the attitude towards Hungarian-speaking Roma from Ukraine, it seems difficult to speak of systematic or structural discrimination against Roma refugees. However, a different picture might emerge if the situation of people who are viewed as Roma by volunteers or state structures is examined more closely, as they fit stereotypes and prejudices.

Many of the refugees who remained in Hungary are from the Transcarpathian region of Ukraine where many people of Hungarian and/or Roma origin live. Their knowledge of the Hungarian language makes it reasonable to choose Hungary, as integration and “getting by” should be easier than in other countries. In addition, many men already worked in Hungary before the war and their families have now joined them in Hungary. Proximity to Ukraine and existing family connections are other pull factors.

In terms of status and documents, there are two kinds (or groups) of Roma refugees in Hungary. The first consists of those who hold dual (Ukrainian and Hungarian) citizenship. The second consists of those with only Ukrainian citizenship who thus apply for a refugee card (“menedékes kártya”). The two groups have different means for accessing essential documents and services.

In the first period after they fled Ukraine, persons with dual citizenship were considered Hungarian citizens having the same rights as any other Hungarian citizen. In spring 2022, the Hungarian authorities clarified that persons with dual citizenship are recognized as citizens of Hungary but are eligible to receive assistance under the temporary protection regime. Dual Hungarian-Ukrainian citizens with a permanent address in Ukraine are not granted refugee status but are instead granted all the services and benefits that go with that status. Dual citizens can access assistance in housing, health care, subsistence support, employment, translation of personal documents, education for children, six months of free school meals for students, Hungarian personal ID and address cards, along

with a number of types of family support (Magyar Helsinki Bizottság 2022).<sup>5</sup> Dual citizens must obtain address and social security cards, and presentation of both is necessary in order to register children in school.

Those lacking Hungarian citizenship must obtain a “refugee card” in order to access essential services. When the war started, many from this group could cross the border with their kids with birth certificates for the kids, if they had no other documents, because that was enough to show at the border. Once arriving in Budapest they were assisted by workers at their accommodations in registering as refugees and getting their refugee cards. Only those can receive refugee card, who crossed the border after February 24, 2022. Field reports indicate that many of those who did not stay in Budapest have not obtained their cards, as they have not been offered assistance to do so. Presentation of the refugee card or Ukrainian passport provides access to health care services (functions as a Hungarian social security card). The refugee card also allows children to register in school, as it serves as an address/residence card. In-person presentation of the refugee card every month at a Hungarian state labor office allows refugees to pick up 13.700 HUF per child plus 22.800 HUF of financial support. Experiences from other organizations working with Roma refugees (Romaversitas, UNHCR) show that many of the Roma with dual citizenship are not aware that they can profit from the temporary protection system due to the fact that many are not informed they are eligible despite having dual citizenship.

Roma who have fled to Hungary, while often fluent in Hungarian, face multiple discrimination as Roma, Ukrainians and refugees. There are reports about unequal treatment of Roma refugees (AI 2022); or of Roma refugees accused of not being „real refugees” (Ellena & Makszimov 2022). In the first weeks of the war government institutions were reluctant to assume overall responsibility for the Roma refugees arriving in Hungary and it was mainly Roma civil society organizations, human rights organizations and church communities that looked after and supported the refugees (Forgacs 2022). Many Roma organizations are still involved in different aspects of assisting Roma refugees which in most cases they lack long-term and sufficient support. In the meantime, the state has at least taken over the management of the „initial reception centre” in Budapest, a former sports hall. However, across the country many of the refugees, still depend on the support of civil society organizations, including supplies of food and non-food items.

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5 See: <https://helsinki.hu/tajekoztato-az-ukrajnabol-menekulo-ukran-magyar-ketos-allampolgaroknak>

According to statements from Roma organizations prejudices and discrimination by non-Roma volunteers working with refugees were observed. The support to the Roma refugees from Ukraine creates problems with local vulnerable Roma communities who don't receive support, but often live in deplorable circumstances and need support too. Suffice to say, despite a degree of state support which the Roma refugees from Ukraine can access, the presence of the NGO sector is crucial in providing extra services, resources, and support for accessing available state services. A weakened NGO presence would result in an even worse situation for the Roma refugees.



## 5. RESULTS OF THE NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The goal of the assessment was to identify areas where Roma refugees from Ukraine require assistance beyond 2022 and to get an understanding of possible fields of interventions and of possible activities of organizations and institutions with Roma refugees from Ukraine in Hungary.

The assessment consisted of three components.

- First, a questionnaire with 30 heads of families (primarily women) with some questions directed to the situation of children.
- Second, two focus group sessions with 20 persons each.
- Finally, we analyzed how far the findings of the assessment correspond with the findings of similar assessments conducted in Hungary in recent weeks.

### 5.1 QUESTIONNAIRE RESULTS

#### 5.1.1 GENERAL INFORMATION

##### Respondents

Each of the 30 respondents was the head or co-head of a family, thus representing a family. The questionnaire was designed such that it can be employed for other Roma refugee groups in Hungary.

Three-quarters of our respondents were women. The average age of the respondents was 34,5, with the youngest being 17 and the oldest 60.

**Number of respondents (i.e., questionnaires filled): 30**

**Average age of respondents: 34,5**

**Number of women among respondents: 23 (6 men, 1 NA)**

##### Composition of families

We assumed we would be encountering families in the field, and as such one of our units of analysis would be the nuclear family. This held true: only two

respondents reported they had no children. The childless respondents did report, however, that they were married or in a partnership.

**Number of respondents stating they are married  
(or in a partnership): 22 of 30**

On average, respondents had 2,5 children; the vast majority of these children were of school age, although a number of adult children were reported. All in all, the respondents reported 76 children, of which 23 were over the age of 17. Among the children, girls somewhat outnumbered boys (41 to 33).

**Average number of children per respondent: 2,5**  
**Total number of children reported in survey: 76**  
**Total number of school-age children reported: 53 (of 76)**  
**Number of female children reported: 41 (33 male children)**

##### Places of origin in Ukraine

Table 1 shows the answers to the question of place of origin in Ukraine. A high number of the respondents living in the hostel on the outskirts of Budapest were from the town of Csop/Csap, with a population of 9.000.

We can thus assume many of the members of this group knew each other in Ukraine (while the focus group discussion did not confirm this, it did not refute it either). The rest of the respondents' places of origin were more scattered, meaning they may have had less access to personal networks from home while in Hungary.

**Table 2: Place of origin in Ukraine**

	no. of responses
<b>Serne/Szernye</b>	3
<b>Csop/Csap</b>	9
<b>Demecsi/Dimicsö</b>	3
<b>Mukachevo/Munkács</b>	2
<b>Uzhhorod/Ungvár</b>	2
<b>other</b>	9

## Arrival in Hungary, state of families

A slight majority of respondents reported arriving in Hungary in February or March of 2022, i.e., immediately after the start of the war in Ukraine.

### Arrival in Hungary: 17 report arrival at or immediately after breakout of war

In total it was reported that 9 children had been left behind in Ukraine. Their average age was 21,2, meaning these are largely adults.

### Reported number of children left in Ukraine: 9 Average age of children reported left in Ukraine: 21,2

However, 22 of the families reported that other family members (other adults) were still in Ukraine for various reasons. This applied to elderly parents, adult men, and the wives of adult men.

### Number of respondents reporting some family left in Ukraine: 22

When asked why family members had stayed in Ukraine, we were given the answers presented in Table 2.2. The question was open-ended, and the table contains the frequencies for the categories we saw in the responses. Many respondents stated more than one reason.

**Table 3: Reasons family members were left in Ukraine**

reason	number of mentions
not let out	6
papers	3
male	5
conscription / military	3
went home, had enough	1
died in war	1
family, stay together	6
health	3
no willingness	1

## Documents

We assumed that many Roma in Ukraine did not obtain all necessary documents, while on the other hand some might obtain Ukrainian and Hungarian documents. In order to access most services, the Roma refugees required documentation, including various types of identification and authorization. Table 3 shows what documents the respondents themselves and their children had when the survey was conducted. Our assumption about a lack of documents was misplaced.

**Table 4: Possession of documents for adults and children:**

	Ukrainian passport	Ukrainian ID	birth certificate	Hungarian passport	Hungarian ID	Hungarian address card	Hungarian social security card	dual citizen residence permit	asylum/refugee ID
respondent (out of 30)	28	24	23	14	11	2	3	11	16
children (total, up to 4 children measured per family, of 76 children)	43	37	54	21	11	2	1	19	32

Among the respondents, almost all had Ukrainian passports, ID-s and birth certificates. Almost half had Hungarian passports, likely meaning they were dual citizens. The levels of possession of local Hungarian documents were very low. Just more than half of the respondents had what could be deemed documentation assigned to asylum seekers and/or refugees. The way this was identified in the survey was “Registered as asylum seeker / received refugee status (ID card)”. However they reported the lack of having refugee cards (menedékes kártya) our colleagues later confirmed that the questioned families do have this card because it is obligatory to have it for staying in the shelters.

The “refugee card” should enable the holder to access services. As described in section 4.2, the asylum status entitles a refugee to health care, schooling, accommodation, food, financial support of HUF 22.000/month and free language training. The processing time for asylum applications is 45 days, which is also important because a government decree stipulates that from the end of April 2022 only recognized asylum seekers shall be entitled to the monthly subsistence allowance of HUF 22.800. This means that those in need cannot receive this amount during the procedure. Refugee status also entails tax ID cards (necessary for labour contracts). Reports from social workers, however, show that authorities are dragging their feet on issuing such cards to refugees. As such, obtaining a refugee status does not ensure automatic access to essential services granted to Hungarian citizens.

**Table 5: Cross-tabulation for possession of Hungarian passport and registration as asylum seeker / recipient of asylum (with ensuing ID)**

	Has asylum seeker or refugee ID	Does not have asylum seeker or refugee ID
Has a Hungarian passport	2	13
Does not have a Hungarian passport	12	3

Table 5 shows that the possession of Hungarian passports nearly excluded the possession of documentation of refugee status. The reverse is also true, i.e., only 2 persons with refugee status ID carried Hungarian passports. It is possible that only a handful of our respondents with Hungarian passports made full use of the legal avenues available to them. This is most likely caused by a lack of information (or the possession of inaccurate information) among the studied group. This supposition was confirmed in the focus group discussions, where participants were under-informed about the aid available to them and the legal obligations (such as registrations, showing up monthly in a labor office) placed upon them.

The situation for the children was slightly different. Fewer children had Ukrainian documents, and much the same held for Hungarian documents. As such, we are concerned that the low level of documentation of children may mean families are not receiving all the benefits to which they are entitled. Further, lack of documents may be the cause of legal problems in the future.

### Language abilities

In order to measure the language abilities of the respondents, we asked respondents to score their speaking, writing and reading abilities in Romani, Ukrainian, Russian and Hungarian on a 1 to 5 scale. Given some confusion in filling out the survey, we transformed all data on this topic into binary answers (yes and no).

Our group seemed to have some skills in Ukrainian and Russian and very little knowledge of Romani.

The vast majority had mastery of Hungarian, although the reported abilities to read and write were somewhat lower. Given our inability to employ a scale in

language ability responses, we have little information on the presence of illiteracy in the group. Qualitative comments in the questionnaires (“I write Hungarian a little”, “it is the mother tongue of the children”) indicate there may be some deficiencies in the ability to communicate in Hungarian.

The survey data on language ability, combined with data on level of education and focus group discussions clearly show that the Roma refugees on the whole would benefit by developing their language skills, as high functional literacy can by no means be assumed for the group. Table 4.6 shows that Hungarian is the main language used by the group we worked with, with additional knowledge of Ukrainian and Russian. This is a result of our selection bias and should not be extrapolated to other Roma refugees in Hungary.

**Table 6: Language abilities**

	no. of responses
Romani spoken	4
Ukrainian spoken	17
Russian spoken	12
Hungarian spoken	29
Hungarian written	22
Hungarian reader	22

## 5.1.2. SITUATION IN HUNGARY

### Resources for living in Hungary

We measured what resources the families were utilizing to live in Hungary. The families appeared to have very few resources they could directly control (i.e., savings, sales of old possessions) and instead were heavily dependent on external resources or on income through informal work.

This at times meant that one or more of the adults were participating in the labour market. It is worth noting that labour market activity generally meant informal market labour, whereby we must assume the worker has no labour contract and no social security. Responses in the “other” category were at times supplemented with comments like “my husband is working”.

The other key category of resources was external assistance, whether provided by the state or by charity organizations (or from other sources). Others commented on their expenses, stating that they had to pay for their accommodation monthly. The respondents were often quick to add comments to their survey answers. As such, there were 5 explicit mentions of working husbands and 3 explicit mentions of construction work. These comments were corroborated in the focus group discussions. The predominance of informal market work indicates a need for precise information and advocacy concerning labour rights.

Much of the data from the focus group discussions indicates that the respondents were not knowledgeable of the state and humanitarian assistance available to them and further lacked information and tools to access available assistance. That being said, humanitarian assistance - whether from state or civic sources - is clearly a key resource for the Roma families.

**Table 7: What do you live off?**

<b>resource</b>	<b>no. of responses</b>
savings	<b>1</b>
sold possessions from home	<b>1</b>
assistance	<b>6</b>
official work	<b>2</b>
black market work	<b>12</b>
Hungarian welfare, assistance	<b>13</b>
civic aid, charity	<b>7</b>
other	<b>7</b>

### **Experience of discrimination in Hungary**

The final section of the questionnaire focused on discrimination experienced by the respondents while in Hungary. The question, as posed, left room for the respondent to interpret what discrimination meant.

Somewhat surprisingly, many of the questionnaires collected left this section blank. According to one of the researchers who helped fill out the questionnaires,

after explaining different kinds of discrimination to clarify the issue, his respondents would claim that they did not experience such differential treatment in Hungary. Whether the respondents used an absolute or relative scale (i.e., “there is no discrimination here compared to the situation in Ukraine”) is not known and deserves further investigation. What is certain is that the respondents do not perceive discrimination as a pervasive problem when in Hungary.

The focus group discussion did not uncover vast experiences of direct discrimination either. This is yet another topic that is of significance and should be explored further with quantitative (especially participant observation) methods. Fear may also have been a factor preventing them from talking critically about the shelters, for instance, because they did not want to risk the secure shelter they currently have.

The few answers we collected did indicate that discrimination was most prevalent in public-like settings. Mentions of “store, market”, “on the street” and “public transportation” numbered 11, while sixteen mentions related to official or private transactional situations. The low response rate begs further investigation.

In relation to discrimination, our colleagues shared with us the cases they experienced in recent months while helping Roma refugee families to find accommodation and rent: in almost all cases the families were rejected, they did not even get to see the apartment or if they got there, then they were rejected citing false reasons. It was clear to our colleagues and the families that they could not rent a flat due to their Ukrainian and Roma origins and the number of their children.

**Table 8: Locations in which I experienced discrimination:**

	<b>no. of responses</b>
from officials	<b>4</b>
from NGOs	<b>3</b>
police, border guards	<b>2</b>
school, kindergarten, daycare	<b>4</b>
store, market	<b>6</b>
on the street	<b>3</b>
public transportation	<b>2</b>
other	<b>3</b>

### **5.2.3. SITUATION OF CHILDREN IN THE HUNGARIAN EDUCATION SYSTEM**

#### **School participation of children**

One of the key areas of interest when designing the survey tool was the participation and degree of success of the children in the Hungarian school system. Of the recorded 76 children of the interviewed families, it was explicitly stated that 44 children were attending school, while there were 10 responses stating the children were not attending school.

**Children attending school, number of responses: 44 (out of 76)**

**Children not attending school, number of responses: 10 (out of 76)**

#### **Obstacles to school attendance**

Given the relatively low number of children reported not attending school, we recorded very few answers to the question of why children were not in the system. The answers tended to beg explanation and as such we recorded a number of qualitative comments. One mother stated “There is no one to take them to school, and there is always someone at the hostel.”

In the focus group discussion, a respondent indicated that given there was an adult at the hostel, there was really no need for the children to attend school.

One respondent reported an interesting situation whereby her child was not attending a Hungarian school but appeared to be continuing his/her education: “The teacher in Ukraine suggested we study in Ukraine, online.” It appears that the instruction of this child was continuing remotely, online, with a teacher still in Ukraine.

Yet another respondent whose children were not in school claimed that her plans to change her location (currently just outside Budapest) kept her from registering her children: “I want to move to Budapest and will enrol the children there.”

Another respondent reported the need for help with paying for school resources: “I would appreciate school supplies and notebooks.” Several Budapest focus group participants claimed they had received help to acquire school supplies from the municipal government.

#### **Entering the school system**

We asked how the respondents succeeded in registering their children in the school system. The low number of responses (20) compared to the number of children registered in school (44) is likely thanks to parents with multiple children.

Here, seven respondents claimed they were self-sufficient, registering their children on their own without difficulty. Others (13) received assistance from family-friends, NGOs or officials. This drives home the significance of networks of assistance and the need to have successful encounters with officials.

**Table 9: How did you register child/children in school?**

	<b>no. of responses</b>
<b>I did (or my partner did) with no problem</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>I tried several times</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Help from family, friend</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>NGO</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>An official</b>	<b>10</b>

In light of the participation of the children in a new school system and the established testing of school children in Hungarian education, we were also curious about how the school system placed the children (into which school, or which grade) and assumed there would be wide testing of the applicant children.

Only six respondents replied that their children had been tested. Four of these responses concerned a physical test, while two stated their child’s educational level was tested.

A lack of testing can be interpreted both positively and negatively. In a positive sense, testing was likely not used to segregate children (sending them to “special schools”, i.e., schools for children with learning disabilities). At the same time, a lack of testing may cause us to wonder whether children are placed in grades at the level appropriate for them.

A handful of comments in the survey indicated that children were being placed in lower grades (compared to those they had completed in Ukraine). A deeper investigation into grade placement and school placement is warranted. Our discussion with a social worker indicated that the education offered to Roma children in Ukraine is poor, with the schooling and attendance of Roma children not treated as mandatory. This is likely the explanation for the relatively high level of satisfaction parents expressed regarding schooling in Hungary.

**Table 10: Testing of children**

	<b>no. of responses</b>
<b>Was your child tested?</b>	6
<b>Physical test?</b>	2
<b>Education level?</b>	4

### **Meeting the needs of the children in school**

The survey dedicated a number of questions to investigating the quality of services provided to the children in the school system. Overall, the respondents appeared rather satisfied with the education their children were receiving. This may be a reflection of openness and dedication on the part of the Hungarian school system’s teachers and administrators, or a positive judgment reflecting a good education when compared with that in Ukraine. It could also be a combination of the two.

Little about the basis of this positive judgment was reflected in the focus group discussion. As such, more research on the quality and appropriateness of the education given the children is warranted. The authors of the needs assessment propose a participation observation study in schools where Roma refugee children have been placed.

When asked about the kind of help their children were getting at the schools, only one respondent claimed to have asked for assistance and not having received any. The predominant answer to this question claimed the Roma children from Ukraine were receiving the same help as the other children (11 responses).

A number of respondents stated their children were receiving personalized assistance (8), though there was no indication of the nature of this assistance in the survey comments. One focus group participant mentioned after-school tutoring.

**Table 11: Getting the children help (asked for up to five children)**

	<b>no. of responses</b>
<b>My child does not need help</b>	3
<b>We asked and didn’t get any help</b>	1
<b>My child receives the same assistance as all the others</b>	11
<b>Assistance with language</b>	1
<b>Personalized assistance</b>	8
<b>Assistance tailored for Roma or minorities</b>	0

We further asked the respondents to report on the situation of their child/children in the school. The results are presented in Table 13.

**Table 12: Situation of the children in school**

	no. of responses
<b>no problems</b>	6
<b>financial problems</b>	5
<b>can't pay for extracurricular academic activities</b>	1
<b>teachers don't treat the child well</b>	1
<b>other children don't treat the child well</b>	6
<b>parents of other children don't treat the child well</b>	1
<b>limited language ability causes problems</b>	1
<b>separated from Hungarian students</b>	0
<b>not taught at the appropriate level</b>	1
<b>child does not feel well in school</b>	4
<b>child was diagnosed with a disability and is thus treated differently</b>	1
<b>other</b>	3

Looking at response options with 4 or more responses, we see a split. Six respondents reported their children were having no problems in school. Five reported financial problems. As mentioned above, a respondent stated the need for help in acquiring school supplies, while others claimed they had received such help.

Six respondents claimed their child was not being treated well by the other children. The survey did not indicate the extent of such mistreatment and as such we are not in a position to see whether this is a result of discrimination. Four of the respondents claimed their children do not feel well in school. Again, there is little to go on here when reflecting on whether this is normal.

As stated above, little discontent with the school system was expressed in the survey and in the focus groups. At the same time, the focus group discussions did show that some of the children had experienced degrees of trauma and were still affected.

One mother claimed that her child had not been eating since coming to Hungary. Another mother claimed her son had not “found his place” and did not want to attend school. It is possible that the parents are not aware of the effects of trauma on their children, nor of the school’s role in dealing with such trauma. (The lack of discussion of trauma among the respondents themselves is in and of itself an important finding of this research project.)

The next question in the survey, however, measures services provided by the Hungarian schools, although it is not necessarily true that these services were provided by the school itself. For example, 24 of the respondents reported that their child had been seen by a paediatrician and 13 by a child health visitor (likely indicating younger children, i.e., infants). Table 14 shows what services have been provided and accessed.

Only three respondents claimed that their child had been seen by an education expert, which is generally in line with the data in Table 11 where only 4 respondents indicated their child’s/children’s education level had been tested.<sup>6</sup>

**Table 13: Your child has been seen by a:**

	no. of responses
paediatrician	24
child health visitor (védőnő)	13
education expert	3
specialized doctor	3

## 5.2.4. SITUATION IN UKRAINE

### Ukraine education level

The third section of the questionnaire explored the respondents’ life in Ukraine, studying educational background, work situation, housing situation, etc. The aim of this section is to identify aspects of the respondents’ lives that can benefit by being in Hungary through focused training and aid.

<sup>6</sup> The omission of the category “child psychologist” is an oversight by us, the designers of the survey tool. Any continuation of the use of the questionnaire should include this category. It is possible yet not likely that the children have suffered very little trauma per se and are not in need of psychological support. Further investigation is warranted.

Table 15 shows that the level of education of the respondents is low. Only three of the total number of respondents (30) had secondary or higher education. While all respondents had attended school, the most common level of education was the completion of the lower tier of elementary school, followed by having left primary school before completion of the upper level. The levels of education measured are closely related to the lack of vocational training (see below).

Further, doubts about the level of literacy are supported by the findings on the level of education.

This finding does not translate into a lack of concern for the education of the children. As discussed above, the rate of attendance in Hungarian schools for the children of the respondents is relatively high. However, if family education patterns are a concern and indicator of future attainment, attention must be paid to helping the children stay in school longer than their parents did. Despite the given uncertainty on the situation in Ukraine and the expressed desire of respondents to return to Ukraine, it would be worth contributing to improved school performance and attainments among the current school children.

Only 7 of the respondents claimed to have attended a segregated school.

**Table 14: Level of Education in Ukraine**

	<b>no. of responses</b>
<b>elementary school lower, left early</b>	9
<b>elementary school upper, left early</b>	4
<b>completed elementary school upper</b>	11
<b>attended secondary, left early</b>	5
<b>completed secondary</b>	2
<b>attended higher, did not graduate</b>	0
<b>higher education degree</b>	1
<b>never attended school</b>	0
<b>attended school, took a break</b>	0
<b>attended a segregated school</b>	7

Table 16 generally confirms what we learned about language use above. The dominant language is Hungarian (only 1 participant from the focus group had no mastery of spoken Hungarian). This bodes well for the ability of the members of our group to network and communicate with officials in Hungary. Some investment in the further teaching of Ukrainian may result in long-term benefits in a future labour market.

**Table 15: Language of instruction during education in Ukraine**

<b>Language</b>	<b>number of mentions</b>
Hungarian	15
Russian	3
Ukrainian	3

### **Housing situation in Ukraine**

The quantitative data collected on the housing situation in Ukraine does not provide a full picture. While most families live in (ethnically) mixed areas, almost one-third live in segregated conditions. The average number of residents per dwelling is 6,8, with multi-generational homes being quite common (18 of 30). Living with siblings is also a noticeable trend (6 of 30).

Some data on living conditions in Ukraine:

**Number of respondents living in segregated area: 9 (of 30)**

**Number of respondents living in mixed area: 20 (of 30)**

**Average number of people living in one residence: 6,8**

**Table 16: Who do you live with (in Ukraine)?**

	<b>no. of responses</b>
<b>children</b>	27
<b>spouse, partner</b>	23
<b>parents</b>	18
<b>siblings</b>	6
<b>others</b>	3



It was difficult to get a handle on the size of the homes, as respondents used various methods to report this size. A few respondents used square-meters, while the vast majority reported the number of rooms in their homes, while at times mentioning a kitchen in addition. Bathrooms and living rooms were also often mentioned. We cannot assume that the neglect to mention a bathroom means there is no bathroom in the home (though one respondent mentioned an outdoor bathroom, while another explicitly stated they did not have a bathroom). We did not ask whether the respondents lived in apartments or standalone homes (or other).

We did, however, ask about the legal status of the homes. This appeared to be largely in order, with many homes registered in the name of a relative (typically a parent). Of the respondents, five provided answers indicating that the legal status of their home was questionable. This could be an issue of major concern should they decide to return to Ukraine.

**Number of respondents with questionable legal status of home: 5 (of 30)**

**Table 17: Which utilities do you have in the home (in Ukraine)?**

	<b>no. of responses</b>
<b>electricity</b>	29
<b>running water</b>	23
<b>gas stove</b>	24
<b>wood stove, “machina”</b>	26

A means by which we gauged the quality of housing in Ukraine was by asking about the utilities in the home (see Table 18). Almost every respondent claimed to have electricity (29 of 30), while 7 respondents did not indicate they had running water. Four of these respondents stated they had a well in their yard, one claimed they went to the neighbour for water, while two simply stated they did not have running water.

All respondents had heating or a heat source on which to cook in their home, whether gas or wood. Four homes claimed no access to gas (two did not answer).

**Professional skills and training, household income**

Table 19 shows that the level of vocational or trade training is very low. This is not surprising, given the low levels of education reported above. What is instead prevalent is the reporting of skills but with no formal qualifications. The skills the respondents stated having were bricklaying, fingernail styling, agricultural work, makeup artist, hairstylist, cleaning, fruit picking, cooking and baking.

This is of significance because the presence of these skills along with an expressed desire among the respondents to master trades or vocations means that the time spent in Hungary (or perhaps the initial phase of it) can be dedicated to training Ukrainian Roma refugees to master such skills, thereby increasing their labour competitiveness in both Hungary and Ukraine. See below for our recommendations on this matter.

**Table 18: Professional skills and training**

	<b>no. of responses</b>
<b>no vocational training</b>	12
<b>I’m vocationally trained</b>	2
<b>I have a paper from professional training</b>	3
<b>I have no paper but I have skills</b>	12

We also asked respondents about their sources of income in Ukraine. Twenty-one responses (of a total of 32 responses) were connected to labour, including unofficial work, work outside Ukraine, and entrepreneurship. Adding housewife/husband duties brings this number up to 27.

On the other side, the number of respondents with precarious labour conditions (no job, unofficial job) was also prevalent (12 responses).

**Table 19: What did you live off in Ukraine?**

	no. of responses
permanent job	3
permanent job but recently unemployed	1
entrepreneur	1
regular but unofficial job	6
sometimes worked unofficially	5
housewife/husband	8
worked abroad	6
other	0
had no work	2

**Countries in which respondents had worked: Hungary, Czech Republic, Germany, Poland**

This question was repeated to target the men associated with the interviewed women (e.g., husbands/partners). There were 14 respondents stating men in the family had worked abroad. In 11 cases this meant work in Hungary. Hungary was as such dominant in terms of labour markets where our respondents had already sought work.

A separate question asked about services accessed while living in Ukraine. The services about which we asked were connected to household income. The level of access to Ukrainian services appears rather low, with only support for children being significant. Pensions were likely not accessed due to the young age of the respondents. See Table 21 below.

Should access to state benefits be an issue in Ukraine, it is likely to remain an issue once moving to Hungary. As such, assisting the respondents in accessing available forms of assistance and aid should be a priority for all future programs.

**Table 20: In Ukraine I had access to:**

	no. of responses
social support (payments)	2
support for children	10
pension	0
other	1

**5.2. KEY FINDINGS FROM THE FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS**

The survey sessions were accompanied by two large focus group discussions. These allowed respondents to give voice to concerns and issues that could not be brought up in the framework of the questionnaire. The focus groups were also an opportunity to uncover issues that were not built into the design of the survey tool. As such, the sessions provided insight into how the respondents experienced living in Hungary.

Many of the analyses of the survey laid out above contain references to the focus group discussions where relevant. In this section we will concentrate on presenting issues and perspectives not uncovered in the survey.

**Accommodation and food**

There were some expressions of dissatisfaction with the accommodation. One common complaint was that there was no opportunity to cook. This was connected to some frustration with the food that was being served. It appeared that vegetable stew was on the menu too often. And food was described as “dry” (one participant noted the desire for more sauce). When asked what they would cook on their own, some respondents mentioned meatier dishes, sauces, and meat stews. There were some Ukrainian specialties desired as well. There was discussion of opening a common kitchen in two locations.

There was discussion of overcrowding in one scenario for one family. That statement was followed by a brief consideration of what to do.

Supplies and incoming aid were also an issue. One woman spoke of running out of toilet paper at night and being told to go to the store to get some more. This at a time when the stores were closed. There was also a suspicion that aid coming

into the accommodation centres was not being shared with the residents. One woman stated she was receiving nothing at all from the hostel.

A handful of interviewees were more positive about aid at the accommodation. They claimed that they were given help in getting their children to school. Also, it was said that some of the social workers were friendly and helpful. Three social workers were brought up specifically.

### **Getting around**

The topic of transportation came up in various scenarios. The group housed outside Budapest was somewhat frustrated with their location. It could be tough to get to work or to offices where aid could be accessed. Another source of frustration for this particular location had to do with the hostel's location on the top of a hill, requiring a difficult walk from the town when returning to the hostel. There was some confusion regarding which forms of transit were subsidized for them. Getting to and from work was also an issue.

Some ingenuity was shown: one woman managed to time her trips with men who were heading to work and could regularly get a lift. The schoolchildren in the outskirts locale had a school bus organized for them.

### **The state of the children, schools**

There was a conversation about that some children feeling unwell. One woman mentioned that her child had not been eating. Others feel locked in. The view of the treatment of the children in the schools was not positive for all. One family mentioned their children were made to stand much of the day, apparently because of a lack of desks. The same family said that their children only attended school for half a day every day. There was some bitterness toward the children as Roma and as "Ukrainians". Table 13 above shows that some parents perceived their children as having difficulties with other children in the schools.

Some low-level frustration with children being placed in lower grades was prevalent.

Generally, however, the view of the children in school was cautiously optimistic. School attendance was stricter than in Ukraine, and some of the parents were learning from their children.

### **Hungary versus Ukraine**

In both groups there was a view that Hungary was a better place than Ukraine. On one hand there was a view that there was more work in Hungary, and it was easier to get it. In Ukraine jobs went to Ukrainians who were better educated and trained. Not speaking Ukrainian was also a disadvantage and there was almost no chance of getting work in Ukraine.

In Hungary things were better. Some felt they were not looked down upon. "People are nicer to us." Generally, the interviewees felt they were treated better and more equally.

Not all treatment from Hungarians was rosy. One participant described being seen as Ukrainian when in Hungary, with a view that "they were getting everything" and were being taken care of fully. This experience is in line with our anticipation of multiple discrimination (or prejudice in this instance) when being seen as Ukrainian, Roma and a refugee.

### **Lack of information on aid**

This is one of the most important topics covered in the focus groups. Both discussions revealed a general lack of awareness of the sources of aid, the entitlement to various sources of aid, and the information necessary to access aid. Some claimed they had been turned away by NGOs when seeking assistance. There was little knowledge of which offices to visit and when.

The internet was not a tool used for finding assistance and aid. Mobile phones appeared to be used to keep in touch with family members. Much of the information (some of it not very accurate) about aid and sources seemed to travel through informal networks (including gossip).

### **Education of the adults**

As seen in the survey, the level of education of the adults was quite low. Education was stopped early because "things got busy" with issues like marriage and the need to work. It seemed that the participants of the study were not kept in school with messages of it being mandatory.

There was general excitement in one group at the prospect of learning trades and/or vocations. When asked what areas they would like to study, participants listed items found in the comments in the survey or similar (cooking, gardening, hairstylist, nail stylist). The term "medical" was thrown in by one focus group participant.

Another participant stated that those women with working husbands were better off, underlining the significance of labour participation.

### **Free time**

It was stated that the women had very little free time, as much of it was taken up by taking care of their children.

When asked how they spent their free time or leisure time, respondents in one group were hesitant. It appeared leisure time was a relatively unfamiliar idea. The idea of hosting a party, picnic or a ball was received somewhat positively. More positive was talk of food. There was enthusiasm for the idea of women doing more cooking, preparing dishes they enjoyed more.

Another leisure activity brought up was taking the family out to eat. This meant affordable meals, like street food (gyros) or fast food (McDonald's). Some respondents said this was something they managed to do irregularly.

There were no concrete plans for Christmas. Some were sceptical about their ability to give the children gifts.

### **Leaving Ukraine and coming to Hungary**

This topic came up in only one group. Description of the days in Ukraine when the war broke out conveyed a sense of disbelief. One man spoke of seeing the images of war in Kyiv on television while things locally were calm. Another man spoke of the fear sparked by hearing sirens.

Frustration was expressed at being considered something less than real refugees or people fleeing a war. There was concern about conscription for the men. According to the participants many men were not able to cross the border at all.

Having come into Hungary seemed to have been a very dark experience for many families. There were stories of being denied aid (thanks to being Roma), or not knowing where to turn, or racist aid workers. The process of accessing help seemed very haphazard, although there were some stories of receiving help from capable NGOs.

### **Shifting values**

A number of discussions in the focus groups indicated that some value shifts were taking place among the Roma refugees from Ukraine. Despite the loss and shock of having to leave home, life in Hungary was changing lifestyles and mindsets. Although hardships were undeniable, many of our interviewees also saw and embraced new opportunities.

One such opportunity concerned adult education. With less dependence on the men in the families and with an environment more supportive of adult further training, respondents were enthusiastic at the prospect of learning trades. In the eyes of the interviewees, this would not have been possible in Ukraine.

While some of the families we encountered had been in fact reunited with the male members upon fleeing to Hungary (many men were active in the Hungarian labour market), several women were leading their families without the presence of the men. This explicit independence from the men may be an explanation for the general excitement about vocational training for adults and a generally positive view of the schooling of their children in Hungary.

While this was not an explicitly discussed subject in the focus groups, an interview with a field aid worker pointed out a shift experienced by several Roma groups regarding their security. Initial situations of extreme uncertainty and insecurity led to behaviour aimed at survival, which could entail behaviour like hoarding or the expression of hostility. The interviewee stated that once the families began to feel that there would be a dependable stream of resources available to them, i.e., they would not have to struggle daily for survival, they made significant strides in integrating into their environment. As such, solidarity, empathy, and predictable aid have improved the lives of Roma refugee families from Ukraine.

An unexpected finding of the survey was the low level of reporting of instances of discrimination in Hungary. As described above, it may be that the families are objectively not experiencing discrimination, or that the level of unequal treatment they encounter is low compared to that experienced in Ukraine. That being said, reporting on being better treated while in Hungary contributed to a sense of wellbeing among the respondents.

## 6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The assessment demonstrates the urgent need for future interventions with Roma refugees from Ukraine in Hungary.

Not least due to the reluctance of relevant state authorities to assume more responsibility working with Roma refugees from Ukraine, civil society organizations have to assume the task of supporting Roma refugees from Ukraine.

Currently, organizations such as Oltalom Karitatív Egyesület, Romaversitas Alapítvány, Voice or the XXI. századi Roma Nők Egyesülete are already actively working with Roma refugees. However, they have different focus and different capacities and strengths.

In light of the limited capacities of these and other organizations working with Roma refugees from Ukraine, it would be more appropriate for several organizations to cooperate, but clearly delineate their responsibilities.

Within the coalition, these different strengths could be utilized for more targeted interventions according to their respective capacities and strengths. Overlapping activities could be avoided and the coalition could reach out to more refugees in need.

Prior to the actual start of new interventions, it might prove to be useful to undertake a more detailed mapping of current and planned activities of civil society organizations with Roma refugees from Ukraine. A capacity assessment of civil society organizations potentially included in the cooperation should also be carried out.

The assessment identified fields of future intervention which correspond with the findings of other studies and has enabled us to offer a set of recommendations. These recommendations do not only refer to concrete activities with refugees, in particular women and children, but also target the improvement of the efficiency and delivery of existing programs and capacity-building for Roma activists.

Although nobody can assess when the war against Ukraine will end and how the conditions for a return will look, it is necessary to develop a project lasting until end of 2024 at least. The project team should regularly evaluate further needs

(every six months) and produce reports on the situation and needs of the Roma refugees from Ukraine in Hungary. These reports could identify further fields of interventions. Therefore, a further project should allow for a certain flexibility.

## RECOMMENDATIONS:

- *Establish a coalition of civil society organizations to run a future project*

Following an accurate mapping of the activities, capacities and needs of organizations working with Roma refugees, a coalition of these organizations should be established to jointly implement a follow-up project, lasting until the end of 2024.

The coalition should continue to deliver humanitarian aid but should also implement other components within the common new intervention.

- *Continue to provide humanitarian aid*

It is essential that efforts to provide humanitarian aid continue. Phiren Amenca and other NGOs have been providing Roma families with humanitarian aid in the form of food and non-food items and many of the Roma refugees rely on this assistance in light of the limited assistance by state authorities.

In light of the limited resources of the women and their families and the challenges to find work, as well as the extremely high inflation in Hungary, remains indispensable providing humanitarian for the duration of their stay in Hungary or until individual women have found permanent paid work remains indispensable.

- *Coordination and mapping of agencies already in the field*

It is evident that several organizations are working with Roma families in the field. Discussions with our respondents and meetings with NGOs demonstrated the need for regular exchanges and coordination and even cooperation.

In the interest of more efficient service delivery and effective referrals, these active organizations should convene regularly to share information with one another and beyond the exchange find a common understanding on how a common approach can be realized.

As a first step we propose to have a roundtable discussion with grassroots organizations, followed by a roundtable involving international organizations.

Based on an accurate mapping of the activities, capacities and needs of those organizations offering assistance to the Roma families, a coordination and cooperation mechanism could be set up.

The mapping results should be shared widely in the NGO community and among the groups we are trying to aid.

- *Provision of information and advice service*

Our respondents had little awareness of their rights, of which agencies are obligated to help them, of various sources of aid available, and of their legal obligations while in Hungary. We propose that this knowledge be gathered and standardized such that Roma families be able to access it.

It is essential that this data be provided in a form that is easily accessible to Roma families. However, taking into account the circumstances a standard website or booklet will not work. The team lead will be responsible to compile and regularly update the needed information. A network of advocates (see below) will be trained on the information and will disseminate it among refugees.

- *Create and train a network of advocates*

In the interest of providing information and advice (see above) to Roma refugees, we propose the creation of a network of advocates.

They should have the ability to disseminate information and advice to Roma refugees. They should also be able to assist Roma with referrals (to sources of aid and assistance) whenever necessary and could accompany them to meetings with authorities. They should be easily reachable by telephone and via regular personal visits to families. The advocates should be hired by Roma organizations.

Prior to their actual work with refugees, they should receive training on the legal and political situation with regard to refugees from Ukraine in Hungary, in particular with regard to access to education, access to the labour market and training and availability of counselling or other resources for refugees or women and children respectively.

- *Implement job and skills training for adults*

The needs assessment uncovered a generally low level of education and expertise/skills among respondents. The time spent in Hungary, whether temporary or permanent, is an opportunity to deepen marketable skills.

As such, we recommend the development of labour skills development programs. Such programs should offer certification in fields in which there are opportunities in the job market and overlap with the interests and ambitions of the Roma refugees.

These job and skills training activities could be preceded or complemented by literacy courses in Hungarian or even Ukrainian.

- *Implement a mentoring system for school children*

The development of a mentoring system for Roma refugee children should be paired with easily accessible psychological services. Mentors would be able to act as liaisons between Roma families and schools, work with the children on their educational development, and act to motivate children and families for school success.

Furthermore, catch-up classes for those children who didn't attend school in Ukraine regularly and extra-curricular activities and meetings with Hungarians peers should be organized.

Promoting better participation in schooling requires a decision for every child, whether he/she should enrol in Hungarian (language) school or participate online in lessons organized by the education authorities in Ukraine. Taking into account a possible return to Ukraine, the latter might be more promising; however, it requires internet access and a computer/tablet.

- *Provide psychological support*

Psychologists would regularly assess the psychological needs of the children and families and provide services directly or make arrangements for services. Refugees from war-torn zones in Ukraine might have experiences traumata while others might have experienced traumata following discrimination or violence.

- Improve situation in accommodation

It is important to develop new solutions to the housing situation of many of the Roma refugees, since e.g., the conditions in the hostels are not ideal for long-term stays. In light of the tense economic situation and the expected return of the majority of the refugees, it is not likely that accommodation will be constructed for Roma refugees. Advocacy and initiatives have to focus on finding alternative solutions and facilitating access to the housing market.

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