



**“Scaling up a sustainable model for communities living in
non-regulated areas to improve their living conditions –
SCALE IT UP”**

**A survey among people who identify as ethnic Roma or
live in a situation similar to the situation of the Roma –
attitudes towards discrimination practices**

(a summary report on the quantitative survey)

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This report has been drafted under the project "Scaling up a sustainable model communities living in non-regulated areas to improve their living conditions - SCALE IT UP". The project focuses on the need for improving the knowledge and competencies with respect to housing issues and ensuring equal access to public services among municipal staff, and contributes to their active involvement in the process of overcoming the existing stereotypes related to the Roma communities and building mutual trust. The project also empowers the local communities and encourages their direct involvement in decision-making processes. "Urban Sustainability" is a project of the Trust for Social Achievement Foundation implemented in cooperation with the Agency for Marketing and Social Research "Alpha Research", the Community Investment Fund Foundation - Peshtera, Peshtera Municipality and Dupnitsa Municipality.



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1. Objectives, methodology and implementation of the survey

1.1. Objectives

The current quantitative survey was conducted by the sociological agency Alpha Research in the period June 1 - July 21, 2021.

The survey had two main objectives. First of all, it aimed at providing a complete, reliable and reliable picture of the specific characteristics of and the main challenges in front of the people who identify as Roma or live in a situation similar to the situation of the Roma. Secondly, it aimed at identifying the attitudes of these people towards discrimination – whether they can understand, recognize and sense that they have been victims of discriminatory practices.

A number of events and facts characteristic of the social reality in Bulgaria have segregated the Roma minority in a way that led to the existence of over 100 unregulated settlements with a significant percentage of Roma population. For the purpose of ensuring the widest possible representation, a total of 3830 interviews were conducted under the survey with households in such settlements. The survey covered a total of 30 municipalities in 17 districts (according to the NUTS III classification). Thus, the results of the survey are representative of more than 50,000 Roma or people who live in a situation similar to the situation of the Roma.

In order to highlight the specific differences (whatever they are) between the different regions the municipalities covered by the survey have been classified into three groups (depending on the problems, challenges, attitudes of the target households and opportunities for action). The differences and specific characteristics have been analyzed against the average level for the studied general population. This is the most reliable way to for highlighting these characteristics (otherwise the living conditions and the needs of the target group in all municipalities should be defined in the same way - as severe, problematic, challenging, requiring solutions). Each group of municipalities has been assigned a color, and each color has been used to indicate the following characteristics:

***A table of the three categories of municipalities**

Group/ color	Definition
	The households in this group of municipalities experience serious problems and challenges in most of (if not all) areas of the survey – there is a sense among them of the use of discriminatory practices in communicating with local authorities, institutions, local community leaders. The situation within the households on this group has been defined as the most difficult, and both the households and the institutions experience a lot of challenges.
	For the households in this group of municipalities (some) conditions have been identified for recognizing and overcoming discrimination practices. The conditions for positive development in the different municipalities are of a different nature but the problems and challenges still dominate.
	Not only positive trends have been identified in this group of municipalities, but also some steps have been implemented/ achieved in the direction of overcoming discriminatory practices. Again, the households in this group of municipalities experience significant challenges but compared to the average level for the general population, they are in a more favorable situation.

The analysis has classified the municipalities with respect to each group of indicators, and a general classification has been made at the next stage. As expected, one and the same municipality may fall into a different group depending on the level of the individual indicators. This approach allows easy tracking of the position of the municipality in the different groups with respect to each of the topics investigated in the survey.

2. A summary of survey results

2.1. General trends

The overall picture with respect to understanding, recognizing and sensing discriminatory practices against the inhabitants of unregulated areas and illegal dwellings in the municipalities covered by the project exhibits the following main characteristics:

The demographic, educational and labor profile of households is very different from the national average:

- In most of the target households, women identify themselves as the head of the household (while at the national level this role has been taken by men). This is not a fundamental difference that leads to a deterioration in the quality of life and a higher risk of discrimination. The fact that in most of the households (which remain highly patriarchal in the Roma community) women play a leading role is indicative either of the overall absence of men (i.e., women who got divorced, left their partners or broke family ties), or of the fact that men do not live permanently in the household (e.g. work abroad or in another city or town), or that if they live in the household, they are not in the position to find successful realization and take over the functions of the head
- At the same time, the main members of the household have an extremely low educational status (91% have no education or have completed primary education), which means that it is difficult for them to find a job and that they have a low level of awareness of the rights and obligations.
- The members of the target households have a lower average age, which, on the one hand, could be seen as a favorable circumstance (more people in active working age, more opportunities for economic activity and more chances for improving their situation). However, the reality is different: compared to the national average the younger adult household members experience serious obstacles with respect to finding a job and constitute a large part of the vulnerable, inactive citizens on the labor market. This situation comes as a result of both the lower educational level and qualifications of these people (which does not allow them to find sustainable employment and achieve social integration) and of their predominantly female profile (as they are engaged in raising children in the household).
- The current survey also established a higher than the national average number of children in the household and, respectively - a higher number of household members in general. In other words, the representatives of the target group not only have difficulties in achieving better personal realization, but also face the need of taking care of larger households.
- As a result, the majority of the household members remain poorly educated (the only exception has to do with the trend of a slight increase of the proportion of children in the education system in recent years but many of them drop out in the upper grades) and suffer

from high unemployment rate (there is at least one unemployed adult in every second household and there is at least one full-time employee in a quarter of the households). Yet another problem has to do with the fact that employed household members are very often engaged in of temporary or seasonal work

- **Lack of confidence with respect to one's own ability to achieve better living conditions.** Every second representative of the target households in the surveyed municipalities holds the opinion that they are not responsible for their situation and they are not in the position to change it. Only one third of the respondents have the confidence that their life is in their hands.
- **Extremely poor level of awareness of the respondents with respect their civil rights,** the extent to which they are protected by the Bulgarian legislation and their legal obligations (68% of the respondents are more or less unfamiliar with these issues). This is a problem that requires a relatively urgent solution (in view of the fact that this solution has to do with communication, it can be implemented relatively easily) as the lack of awareness leads to causes two equally harmful reactions
 - The respondents live with the feeling that they are all the time victims of discrimination, they are constantly frustrated and they think that harm is done to them even when this is not the case. This attitude has led to a persistently negative attitude towards institutions and people from other communities, and has resulted in an inability to act reasonably in the presence of a problem.
 - Or people suffer from a complete lack of sensitivity with respect to discrimination and accept everything as part of the normal course of events, thus overlooking actual manifestations of discrimination **and not responding to them in an adequate manner.**

Currently most of the members of the target group have the feeling that the discriminatory practices against them are based on ethnicity. This is the only hypothesis in which a large number of the respondents have declared that they have a feeling that they have been discriminated against:

- The representatives of the target group mention discriminatory experience in relation to a job search process. Every second respondent claims that he/ she has been discriminated against in this context.
 - Significant, but less cumulative (21% to 25%), is the feeling of being discriminated against on the basis of ethnicity with respect to access to healthcare, infrastructure (especially sanitation), social assistance.
 - To a lesser extent the representatives of the target group think of themselves as being discriminated with respect to access to education and public transport.
 - Due to the lack of awareness, however, most of the respondents remain passive (40%). If they react at all, their response is limited to sharing the case with their family members.
- **Lack of experience with respect to having systematic dialogue with the institutions**, including with the local administration, especially on housing issues. With a few exceptions, the communication regarding housing and urban planning of the neighborhood was done on the initiative of the citizens themselves. A more significant problem, however, has to do with the result of the interactions, which rarely lead to a feasible solution. People are usually offered a solution that they find difficult or impossible to implement, and 38% of the interactions have not even led to a potential solution. Without excluding the scenario in which the lack of a solution might be due to an objective impossibility to find one, the fruitless communication with the institutions has made people believe that there is insufficient commitment on their part with respect to the problems of the population. Respectively, the survey found strong polarization in the opinions of the respondents regarding the level of understanding and support on the part of the local authorities. As a result, more than 60 percent of the respondents feel neglected, insulted, or not given their due by the municipal administration because of their ethnicity.
 - **The lack of experience with continuing dialogue with local authorities and community leaders** has also been identified as a serious problem. It has been believed that local leaders have a strong influence on the community. The fact that the contacts with them are rare might lead to alienation and loss of trust in them. A positive aspect has to do with the fact that local leaders are more active (compared to municipal authorities) in

establishing contact with the Roma population. However, it would be useful to establish this dialogue (both on the condition of housing and on all other topics) as a more systematic practice. It could help raise awareness with respect to the rights and obligations, increase the level of trust between people and institutions, find possible and effective solutions to people's problems and overcome discrimination practices.

3. Summary of the specific characteristics by municipalities

In addition to the general trends highlighted in the survey, each of the municipalities covered by the project has its own specific characteristics which have to be kept in mind. The next part of the report contains a summary of the characteristic features of each of the 30 municipalities. The municipalities have been presented in alphabetical order.

Municipality	Demographic profile and specifics of the households	Labor and educational status of the households	Attitudes towards discrimination in terms of relations with local authorities	Intensity of the dialogue with local community leaders	Attitudes towards different discrimination forms
Antonovo	Green	Red	Yellow	Red	Red
Belogradchik	Green	Yellow	Red	Red	Red
Berkovitsa	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Red	Red
Bratsigovo	Red	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow
Velingrad	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red
Vetovo	Green	Yellow	Green	Red	Red
Vidin	Green	Green	Red	Red	Red
Varbitsa	Green	Red	Yellow	Yellow	Red
Gurkovo	Yellow	Red	Green	Green	Red
Dobrich	Yellow	Red	Yellow	Red	Red
Dunavtsi	Red	Yellow	Red	Red	Red
Dalgopol	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red
Isperih	Red	Red	Red	Red	Red
Ihtiman	Red	Yellow	Red	Red	Red
Kotel	Green	Yellow	Green	Yellow	Green
Kubrat	Green	Red	Red	Red	Red
Lom	Yellow	Yellow	Red	Red	Yellow
Lukovit	Red	Green	Green	Green	Red
Mezdra	Green	Yellow	Red	Red	Red
Montana	Green	Green	Red	Yellow	Red
Nikola Kozlevo	Green	Green	Green	Yellow	Green
Nikolaevo	Red	Green	Yellow	Yellow	Red
Pavlikeni	Yellow	Red	Yellow	Red	Red
Petrich	Red	Yellow	Red	Green	Red
Provadia	Yellow	Red	Red	Red	Red
Rakitovo	Yellow	Red	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow
Samokov	Yellow	Red	Red	Green	Green
Sredets	Red	Red	Yellow	Yellow	Yellow
Strelcha	Red	Green	Yellow	Red	Yellow
Tvarditsa	Red	Red	Green	Green	Green

Municipality of Antonovo

The municipality has been positioned in the "red" zone with respect to most of the indicators. This is due to the unfavorable situation of the target households in terms of their members' educational and employment status, their low level of awareness regarding their rights and obligations, and their lower self-esteem with respect to influencing their own lives and responding to potential discrimination. The local residents feel understood and supported by the local authorities but this is not the case when it comes to their relations with their community leaders..

Municipality of Belogradchik

The households in this municipality exhibit a relatively favorable socio-demographic profile and higher than the average level of awareness with respect to the rights and obligations of their members. But they remain passive to the manifestations of discriminatory behavior. The dialogue with both local authorities and community leaders is either a challenge, or does not exist at all.

Municipality of Berkovitsa

Households in this municipality exhibit a favorable socio-demographic profile, but show a low level of awareness with respect to their members' rights and obligations. This situation results in greater sensitivity to different manifestations of discrimination and greater responsiveness in this respect. More favorable conditions have been observed for overcoming the problems by communication with the local authorities rather than through interactions with community leaders.

Municipality of Bratsigovo

This is one of the municipalities in which, despite the existing challenges, the situation with respect to discrimination is more favorable. The factors that have contributed for these developments have to do with the better awareness of people on these issues and the availability of conditions for establishing dialogue with both the local authorities and the community leaders.

Municipality of Velingrad

The target households in this municipality have been positioned in the "red" zone with respect to all indicators. In other words, there are serious problems in all areas despite the more frequent (compared to other municipalities) communication of people with the local authorities. There is a dominant opinion that local people receive support and understanding neither from the municipal administration, nor from the community leaders.

Municipality of Vetovo

The households in the municipality stand out by exhibiting a relatively favorable socio-demographic status and good relations with the local authorities. However, the challenge has to do with the low level of awareness of respondents' rights and obligations, the difficulty in distinguishing different forms of discrimination, and respectively, the lack of adequate reactions in such cases. The communication between people and the community leaders also seems problematic.

Municipality of Vidin

This municipality is characterized by a relatively favorable socio-demographic profile of the target households, including a higher level of awareness of respondents' rights and obligations. At the same time, however, there is an agreement among local residents that there are serious problems and manifestations of discrimination based on ethnicity. The same negative attitudes have been expressed with respect to the level of dialogue with the local authorities and the community leaders.

Municipality of Varbitsa

The profile of this municipality has been characterized by low level of awareness of people's rights and responsibilities, the lack of a sense of discrimination and the lack of sense of support from the local authorities and the community leaders. This situation might be positive but also the respondents might interpret it as positive due to an inability to understand it or due to a low level of awareness.

Municipality of Gurkovo

Despite the socio-demographic challenges that the respondents in this municipality experience, their attitude in terms of the understanding and support on the part of both local authorities and community leaders is positive. There is also a sense of discrimination which seems to go unnoticed by the respondents.



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Municipality of Dobrich

This is one of the municipalities in which the target households face serious challenges: lack of information, lack of self-confidence, sense of non-discrimination and, respectively, inability to respond to different forms of discrimination. There are some positive trends with respect to the communication of respondents with the local authorities but the communication with the community leaders seems to be problematic.

Municipality of Dunavtsi

The representatives of the target group in the municipality are in an unfavorable situation with respect to all indicators. They experience serious difficulties or lack of contact with both the local authorities and the community leaders. In general, the respondents are unaware of their rights and obligations. They live with the widespread feeling of being victims of discrimination without knowing how to respond to it.

Municipality of Dulgopol

The households in this municipality have been positioned in the "red" zone with respect to all groups of indicators: an unfavorable socio-demographic profile, a lack of awareness with respect to their rights and obligations, a problematic (or non-existent) dialogue with the local authorities and the community leaders.

Municipality of Isperih

Just like in the other surveyed municipalities, the representatives of the target group in Isperih have been positioned in the "red" zone with respect to all groups of indicators. In other words, their socio-demographic profile implies a low level of awareness of their rights as well as poor knowledge in terms of responding to different forms of discrimination. There are also challenges in terms of the dialogue of the respondents with the municipal authorities (if there is one at all), they do not feel that their problems have been understood, there is a lack of trust in the community. The survey also came up with a widespread feeling among the respondents of being discriminated against and unable to respond to different forms of discrimination..

Municipality of Ihtiman

Some positive trends have been observed in terms of the socio-demographic profile of people which have failed to help people increased their level of self-confidence and/ or awareness of

their rights and obligations. Challenges have also been observed with respect to the communication with both institutional and community leaders.

Municipality of Kotel

This is one of the municipalities with a more favorable profile with respect to a number of factors such as: a better socio-demographic profile of the target households, a higher level of awareness, better communication and interaction with the local authorities and the community leaders.

Municipality of Kubrat

The target households in this municipality stand out by exhibiting a relatively favorable socio-demographic profile, but fail to take a good position with respect to the issues of discrimination. They lack self-confidence that they can improve their way of life, they are not aware of their rights and obligations, they find it difficult to distinguish between different forms of discrimination (although they feel discriminated against). The dialogue with the local authorities and the community leaders is also absent (or problematic), so the respondents have no one to rely on.

Municipality of Lom

In this municipality the survey encountered a controversial situation. Although there are some positive trends, the challenges dominate. The representatives of the target group admit that their level of awareness on these topics is low but they have self-confidence and do not hesitate to react to any behavior they consider a form of discrimination. The communication of the respondents with both the local authorities and community leaders also seems to be problematic.

Municipality of Lukovit

The situation with respect to discrimination seems to be problematic in this municipality. Respondents' level of awareness is low. They do not have confidence that they can change their lives for the better but rely on the local authorities and the community leaders in this regard. In general, the respondents in this municipality show the highest level of satisfaction in terms of the support they receive from the municipal authorities and the community leaders.

Municipality of Mezdra

The target households in the municipality stand out by exhibiting a more favorable socio-demographic profile, which hasn't helped them increase their level of awareness or self-confidence. The respondents have partial trust in the local authorities but there are also challenges when it comes to communicating with them. The communication with the community leaders seems to be even more problematic. As a result, the respondents feel discriminated against but don't know how to respond to different forms of discrimination.

Municipality of Montana

Just like in some other municipalities, the situation in Montana is controversial. The representatives of the target group exhibit a relatively more favorable socio-demographic profile but show neither self-confidence, nor awareness of the issue under discussion. The relations with the local authorities have been positioned in a "red" zone. Some positive trends have been observed with respect to respondents' communication with the community leaders. People feel discriminated against but at the same time do not respond to discriminatory behavior.

Municipality of Nikola Kozlevo

This is one of the municipalities that exhibits the most favorable profile with respect to discrimination. The target households have been positioned in the "green" zone for all indicators, except for the respondents' interaction with the local leaders, where some challenges have emerged. Otherwise, people feel informed and confident that they know how to respond to different forms of discrimination.

Municipality of Nikolaevo

The situation in the municipality is contradictory due to the characteristics of the demographic profile of households, the lack of self-confidence among the respondents and their low level of awareness with respect to discrimination. There are positive trends but also challenges in the relations of the respondents with both local authorities and community leaders. At the same time, people live with the feeling that they have been discriminated against without knowing how to respond to discrimination.

Municipality of Pavlikeni

In general, the situation in this municipality is unfavorable in terms of how respondents perceive discrimination. There are some positive trends in the communication of respondents

with the local authorities (in terms of attitude and sense of understanding and support). However, the contacts with the community leaders have been positioned in the "red" zone. Similarly, the level of awareness and self-esteem are rather low thus preventing the adequate recognition and response to discrimination.

Municipality of Petrich

The survey came up with a controversial situation in the municipality. In general, this municipality has been characterized by an unfavorable socio-demographic profile, a low level of self-esteem of the respondents and a low level of awareness of their rights and obligations. The communication with the local authorities is considered to be more active compared to the other municipalities but it has been accompanied by problems and a lack of understanding and support. The positive trend in the interactions with the community leaders has a certain compensatory role but it is not sufficient to neutralize the sense of discrimination among the respondents and help them respond to it.

Municipality of Provadia

The households in this municipality have been positioned in the "red" with respect to almost all indicators. Serious challenges have been observed in terms of the level of awareness, the ability to recognize discriminatory practices and the ways to respond to them. The dialogue with the local authorities and the community leaders also seems problematic.

Municipality of Rakitovo

The representatives of the target group in this municipality have been put in the "yellow" zone with respect to most of the indicators. There are a number of problems and challenges dominate but there are also positive trends such as the level of respondents' self-confidence that they can influence their lives, their communication with the local authorities, the level of awareness of their rights and obligations, and the way in which they respond to discrimination.

Municipality of Samokov

The households in this municipality exhibit a more unfavorable socio-demographic profile than others, but thanks to the support of community leaders, the weaknesses in this regard have been overcome. People communicate with them and with the local authorities, show awareness of their rights and obligations, and are ready to respond to discriminatory behavior.

Municipality of Sredets

The representatives of the target group in this municipality have an unfavorable socio-demographic profile and experience challenges with respect to discrimination. However, there are some positive trends, including the dialogue (which is not very intense) with the local authorities and the community leaders, the feeling that the authorities understand people and support them, the respondents' awareness of their rights, fewer manifestations of discrimination.

Municipality of Strelcha

Despite the overall unfavorable demographic profile of the households in this municipality, their educational and employment status allows them to have some self-confidence that their lives depend on their choices. Similarly, although marked by different challenges, the communication with the local authorities takes place, and there is a moderately positive attitude the authorities understand and support people. People in the municipality show a relatively high level of awareness of their rights, and the cases of discrimination are rare. Some of the most serious challenges have to do with the intensity of the respondents' communication with the community leaders.

Municipality of Tvarditsa

Despite the markedly unfavorable socio-demographic profile of the target households in this municipality, they receive support from both local authorities and community leaders. This support increases the level of their self-esteem, awareness and confidence in recognizing and responding to discrimination. As a result, Tvarditsa is one of the municipalities whose residents share the opinion that there are not victims of discriminatory practices.