



**DRU DANISH
REFUGEE
COUNCIL**

Activities for the Stabilization of RAE Community in MRM



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WHO WE ARE

The Danish Refugee Council (DRC) is a humanitarian, non-governmental, non-profit organisation founded in 1956 that works in more than 30 countries throughout the world.

DRC fulfils its mandate by providing direct assistance to conflict-affected populations – refugees, internally displaced people (IDPs) and host communities in the conflict areas of the world; and by advocating on behalf of conflict-affected populations internationally, and in Denmark, on the basis of humanitarian principles and the Human Rights Declaration. We understand “durable solutions” as any means by which the situation of refugees can be permanently and satisfactorily resolved, enabling them to live normal lives. Durable solutions can be voluntary repatriation, local integration or resettlement. In Denmark, DRC assists refugees in all aspects of integration as well as asylum procedures. Internationally, DRC actively participates in supporting the protection of refugees, and promoting durable solutions for conflict-affected populations.



OUR WORK IN MITROVIC /MITROVICA ROMA MAHALLA

The DRC has been present in Kosovo since 1998. In particular, our action in Mitrovicë/Mitrovica Roma Mahalla started in 2003, focusing on finding durable solutions for the displaced Roma and Ashkali from the Mahalla.

During these years, under Government Assistance for Returns funding, DRC began preparations for the return of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and refugees to Roma Mahalla. We also supported Mitrovicë/Mitrovica municipality on the development of the urban plan for the Mahalla.

Since 2007 we have contributed to the reconstruction of several private houses that are now owned by returnee families who originally came from the Mahalla.





STABILIZATION OF THE RAE COMMUNITIES IN MRM

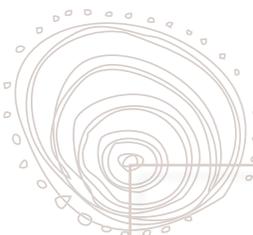
After the two phases of return and reconstruction, DRC activities have been focused increasingly on long term development and complete reintegration of the families. This is why the overall objective of the project which we are implementing on behalf of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) is to contribute to the stabilization of a permanent settlement in Roma Mahalla. This is being accomplished by enhancing the social and economic stabilization of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Communities in Mitrovicë/ Mitrovica in order to help the construction of a multi-ethnic Kosovo.

In fact, through this project which started in 2010 and will come to an end in September 2012, we want to respond to the many ongoing needs that are still affecting the RAE community of the Mahalla.

With our partners we identified two main components around which we have decided to focus our efforts: **livelihoods** and **education**.

The following pages will guide you through some of the main activities we have organized in these tasks, and will show you the direct impact they have had on some of our beneficiaries' lives.





activity area 1

Livelihoods Activities

WELDING AND CARPENTRY WORKSHOPS

These workshops, run by the mentor Besim Ferri in the spaces of the Industrial Hotel, gave 18 men in the Community the opportunity to improve their working skills and, in certain cases, to learn a profession from the start. As a result, the group was involved in several remunerative activities by way of a contract for the sealing of 87 living units of the Camps in the North as well as the construction of banisters for ten of the newly built houses in the Mitrovicë/Mitrovica Roma Mahalla. Moreover, production of wood pallets has been started and steps have been taken to distribute them throughout the region.

KUJTIM TATARI is 41 years old, a forced returnee from Germany where he spent almost half of his life . He only came back to Kosovo in January 2008. While he was abroad he worked as a welder for several companies.

The main problem for our community is always the lack of work so these workshops are useful for us to improve our skills and get more opportunities to earn some money. We do every kind of manual labour that is needed in the Roma Mahalla and I enjoy the fact that we always work together as a group .





LAUNDRY

A small laundry service opened in MRM and, since May 2010, a contract with the local Hotel Palace has been underway. The business is very active in particular during the wedding season: last summer eight women, selected by a panel composed of DRC members, have been working in the laundry. By December 2010, an income of 2.692,00 euros had been generated and the hope for the future is to establish this activity more firmly as a sustainable business contributing in an important way to the empowerment of women in the community.

EMINE KAJTAZI is a 54 year old widow and the mother of two children with whom she lives. After 1999, they lived in the North Camps for almost ten years. At the moment, she is the only full-time employee of the laundry.

This job is a great opportunity for me and my family. Before it, I was forced to collect garbage in order to survive and to feed my children. Now our lives have changed and I m very grateful to the DRC for this.

SEWING WORKSHOP

When, in July 2010, a sewing and tailoring workshop involving several RAE women and one mentor started, its main goal was to produce a small collection of linen for the everyday life. As time has passed, though, the activities of the workshop have attracted more and more women. In particular, twelve young girls have started learning techniques for the production of beautiful, traditional handicrafts, such as beads, jewellery and embroidery, from the older women. This cooperation, and the success of this initiative, has led DRC to explore ways to market some of these handicrafts in the future in order to promote female employment and independence.

XHANXHIFE QAZIMI is 56 years old. She is one of the most active women in the Mahalla and, thanks to her fantastic skills and her strong will to work, she has been one of the most inspiring figures for the younger RAE girls within the frame of the workshop.

I learned these techniques and designs from my grandmother and now I want to transmit them to my younger fellows .





UNITETI WORK PLACEMENT

Thanks to cooperation with the Municipal Rubbish Collection Company, Uniteti, since April 2010, 10 RAE men from Roma Mahalla have had the opportunity to sign a six-month contract to work as employees of the company. After this first period, during which the salaries were provided by the DRC, six of the workers have been confirmed and they have been offered a contract by Uniteti itself. This initiative is not only directly helping the individuals involved and their families, but is also an indirect stimulus to raise community awareness on the problems with the garbage.

MEVRUZ AZEMI and his wife met when they were living in the North Camps as IDPs, married and now they have two children. They came back to Roma Mahalla in 2009.

This job in Uniteti is very important to me and my family because our youngest child suffers from diabetes and thanks to this salary I can afford more medicines for him. I hope my contract will be renewed for a long time so that I will be able to take care of him as long as possible.

activity area 2 Education

THE KINDERGARTEN

The Kindergarten is a colorful, warm and friendly space that welcomes a lot of children from the Roma Mahalla every morning, and was born from the collaboration between DRC and CaritasKos. In total, more than 60 kids aged from 3 to 6 attend its classes: some of them attend regularly, while others come only sporadically. One Albanian teacher and two assistants from the Roma Mahalla are in charge of the educational activities. The children have the chance to socialize by playing, learning and eating all together and it has been observed that those who attend the kindergarten are generally more likely to also attend school regularly in subsequent years.

SADETE GASHIJANI and JALLDEZE MUTISHI are the two RAE assistants of the Kindergarten. They are both in their early 20s and are also very good friends. Yldeza is also the mother of the young Kevin, who is of course one of the most regular attendees of the Kindergarten!

We try to help YLLKA OSMANI (the teacher) in the daily activities she suggests for the kids. We play with them, we provide them with daily meals, we keep the kindergarten clean and sswwe also collaborate with the pre-school teachers to organize common activities.





HOMEWORK SUPPORT

A pre-school activity is also organized in the Roma Mahalla in order to help children aged from 7 to 13 with school homework or, in some cases, to stimulate and encourage those who still do not attend regular schooling in the South or in the North of the city to do so in the future.

One Serbian and one Albanian teacher follow the students with targeted programs depending on the age group and level of instruction. They meet the Directors and teachers from the official schools on a regular basis in order to best coordinate the programs. They also attend a weekly meeting with the DRC staff and the Kindergarten teacher to ensure a consistency and continuity to the activities they propose.

JELENA SIMOVIC is 32 and from Serbia. She came to Kosovo to finish her pedagogical studies one and a half years ago, and since then has decided to stay and has started working for the homework support service. She is the mother of an 8 year old child.

I really enjoy working with the children in the Roma Mahalla and see their progress. I think the biggest goal to work on in order to increase literacy among the RAE community is to convince the parents of the importance of school. The children are already ready to learn .



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