COMMUNITY WORKS PROGRAMME:
BUILDING COMMUNITIES, CHANGING LIVES
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Page Range</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>04-07</td>
<td>Key results achieved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08-09</td>
<td>Building communities, changing lives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-11</td>
<td>How increasing social inclusion can help people embrace differences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12-13</td>
<td>Transforming the lives of children and adults</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14-15</td>
<td>How greater involvement leads to greater understanding and tolerance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16-17</td>
<td>Overcoming mistrust-building a desire to learn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-19</td>
<td>Never too late to learn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-21</td>
<td>Building an integrated community through education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22-23</td>
<td>Reaping multiple benefits from a single solution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24-25</td>
<td>Making the most of donations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Key results achieved

NUMBER OF MUNICIPALITIES INVOLVED (URBAN, RURAL)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Urban</th>
<th>Rural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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NUMBER OF PEOPLE ENGAGED (WOMEN, MEN)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Men</th>
<th>Women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>318</td>
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In all, 538 people in 44 municipalities have participated in the Community Works Programme in the three years since it began. 233 of these, or 44%, are young people, below 29 years of age.
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NUMBER OF PEOPLE ENGAGED (BY AGE)

- Young people up to 29 years of age
  - 2012: 8
  - 2013: 27
  - 2014: 58
  - 2015: 140

- 40% 46.55% 40.55% 44.03%

- Young people up to 29 years of age
  - 2012: 12
  - 2013: 31
  - 2014: 84
  - 2015: 178

- 60.00% 53.45% 59.15% 55.97%

THE PROGRAMME HAS SUPPORTED 149 TYPE OF ACTIVITIES ON LOCAL LEVEL

- Total: 149
  - 2012: 20
  - 2013: 58
  - 2014: 142
  - 2015: 318

- 2012: 20
- 2013: 58
- 2014: 142
- 2015: 318

- Total: 149
BENEFICIARIES

NUMBER OF MUNICIPALITIES INVOLVED

2012: 42
2013: 14
2014: 30
2015: 20

TOTAL NUMBER OF ENGAGED UNEMPLOYED PEOPLE FROM VULNERABLE GROUPS

2012: 318
2013: 58
2014: 142
2015: 20

NUMBER OF END BENEFICIARIES

2012: 1,2030
2013: 9068
2014: 2,312
2015: 440

NUMBER OF PRE-SCHOOL CHILDREN

2012: 120
2013: 331
2014: 1,642
2015: 2,836

CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

2012: 0
2013: 129
2014: 125
2015: 765

ELDERLY PEOPLE

2012: 20
2013: 257
2014: 581
2015: 1,635

PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

2012: 0
2013: 38
2014: 62
2015: 238

Total 23,850

Total 10,946
BUILDING COMMUNITIES, CHANGING LIVES
HOW INCREASING SOCIAL INCLUSION CAN HELP PEOPLE EMBRACE DIFFERENCES

Launched in 2015, the Community Works Programme in Resen has demonstrated the effectiveness of including multiple stakeholders to support the implementation of outreach activities.

The social services project was undertaken by the Municipality of Resen in strategic partnership with the Mobility Association of Persons with Physical Disability, the local Employment Centre and the Social Welfare Centre.

Through their care and dedication, the people recruited to run the numerous social activities of the Programme became an important part of the lives of the beneficiaries, especially so for children with disabilities and their families.

“I saw the real progress my daughter made every day of the Programme,” says Gordana Peshevska, mother of a 16-year old daughter with a disability. “Before these activities started Irena didn’t like leaving home at all. Once they began she could hardly wait for the people from the Association to come round. A physiotherapist would help her with some basic mobility exercises first and then the assistant would take her out—sometimes just to hang out with other children in the town centre, sometimes on field trips or picnics. It was a transformation.”

The services provided by the people in the Community Works Programme included physical activities and entertainment, social events in the countryside and...
activities aimed at helping the beneficiaries build skills that will be useful both at home and outside.

The project has also had a deep and lasting effect in changing some of the previously negative attitudes of people in the community towards persons with disabilities. The variety of social events helped to raise public awareness, breaking down social stigma and encouraging people to embrace difference.

“The project succeeded in achieving a number of aims at once,” says Naume Taskovski, the municipal coordinator of the Community Works Programme. “As well as giving unemployed people the opportunity to gain valuable work experience and helping to end the isolation of some vulnerable people in the community, the project has brought about a genuine improvement in the local people’s understanding of the challenges faced by people with disabilities and their need for integration. People with disabilities are more and more present and involved in the social and cultural life of the municipality, especially children. The project activities have opened people’s eyes—and together we have made Resen a more inclusive and united community.”

Since the project began, many other stakeholders became involved with offers of help, including a generous contribution arising from a donor conference held by emigrants to Australia from Prespa. Members of the Prespa Diaspora collected funds to help furnish a gym with equipment and to procure a transport vehicle for children with disabilities. Private companies from throughout the region of Resen also made significant contributions to support the activities of the project.

The completion of the Community Works Programme has not brought an end to efforts to continue and further its objectives. An association of citizens with disabilities has since been established in the region. Called Humane Prespa, the Association aims both to improve the lives of people with disabilities and to increase public acceptance and awareness of their needs for social inclusion. Meanwhile, the Municipality of Resen has also managed to secure funds to provide opportunities to continue part-time employment to those who were recruited to work for the Programme.
Parents and young children in the small town of Pehcevo have recently seen a major improvement in their quality of life with the opening of a new nursery group for children aged 9-24 months.

For over twenty years the town had no preschool facilities available for this age-group of children, making life difficult for working parents and parents seeking jobs—especially those without additional family support.

Thanks to the collective lobbying efforts of parents and the willingness of the Municipality of Pehcevo to listen and respond to their problems, the creation of a nursery group became the objective of a Community Works Programme launched in 2013.

The reactions of the parents whose children attend the new nursery are unanimous: they say the new service has made a difference to their whole families. The children have an opportunity to socialize and learn while the parents are now able to work or look for employment.

“Since my son started going to nursery I finally have time for my career,” says Stanka Stamenovska, the mother of a two-year old boy attending the nursery.

“Finally we don’t have to organise ‘granny service’ every day!” says Stanka. “And knowing the children are in safe hands means we can get on with other chores and work without feeling worried.”
Like many of the Community Work Programmes implemented throughout the country, the Programme in Pehcevo was designed to tackle multiple issues at once. The new kindergarten services have not only eased the burden of childcare for parents and helped further the early social integration of young children but also opened up job opportunities for long-term unemployed people in the municipality.

Three young unemployed women from the town—Ivana, Biljana and Ance—were hired as preschool nurses to work in the kindergarten.

“We jumped at the chance to get work experience,” says Biljana. “It’s hard enough finding any job these days, but to get experience in the profession you really want is really rare.”

“It’s great to be able to do the work you love in a nice environment,” adds Ivana. “We finally had the opportunity to put our education into practice.”

The enthusiasm of the new recruits quickly won them trust and popularity with the parents and children who benefited from their services. The highly positive reactions of the parents has helped ensure that all three women have now gained full-time employment in the kindergarten.

Ljupco Karakasovski, the municipal coordinator of the Community Work Programme in Pehcevo, puts the success of the nursery project down to joint municipal and community efforts and the implementation of an integrated model. “The common efforts of all stakeholders have contributed to a major improvement in the services we provide for young children.”

Efforts to improve the care available for the youngest in the municipality have not ended with the completion of the Programme. Increased awareness amongst parents of the benefits of early enrolment of their children at preschool facilities has spurred demands for rural children to be included as well.
The design of the Community Works Programme initiative enabled each participating municipality to select the social service area most in need of support from the Programme. For the Municipality of Stip, a clear priority was the need to improve services for vulnerable elderly people. In 2015, therefore, the municipality hired five unemployed people to visit and care for the needs of thirty elderly people.

“With the support and mutual analysis of our partners in the project we identified care for the elderly as our greatest priority,” explains Vanja Dzambazova, CWP Coordinator. “The quality of life of elderly people is important to us and the whole community, and the Programme has enabled us to make a big difference to the most vulnerable group and to the unemployed people we hired to take care of them.”

Eight unemployed people were initially selected to participate in a four-month course of professional training as nurses for elderly people at home. This training has greatly improved the participants’ chances of finding future work in this field of social care.

The five people eventually recruited were then assigned to spend half their working days at the homes of local elderly people, supporting them in carrying out their daily chores, tend to basic health needs and simply giving them someone to talk to.

Feedback from the beneficiaries has been highly positive, with many more elderly people now registering with the
municipality to be placed on the list for visits from the carers.

“The assistance we received from the people hired for the Programme was wonderful,” say Borce I Zorka Icevi, an elderly couple who have problems with mobility. “We came to feel that Rosana was part of our family. We both have problems walking and it was literally a breath of fresh air to come and visit three times a week and help us to get out and about. We really hope the support will continue.”

Rosana Ristova is a young woman from Stip who trained as a physiotherapist but was unable to find work until she participated in the Programme and gained her first on-the-job experience.

“The model of the project in Stip is based on the principle of identifying needs and addressing these needs with multiple partners,” explains Vanja Dzambazova from the municipality. “So we implemented this Programme together with the local Association of People with Disabilities, the Pensioners’ Community and the Social Welfare Centre. It’s been a joint effort and that’s the reason why we’ve achieved such excellent results. What’s more, this is a model that we’re now applying in addressing the needs for all social services in the municipality. Identifying priority needs and developing innovative and well designed services for vulnerable people, especially under circumstances of limited municipal resources, is our priority.”
OVERCOMING MISTRUST-BUILDING
A DESIRE TO LEARN
Neguze, Sanija, and Mertan are three Roma children from Bitola aged 10 who regularly attend the Georgi Sugarev primary school. After missing many years at school, they have now learnt all the letters of the alphabet and can count up to 100. They are learning how to read and write and they look forward to their classes—especially Art. Their teachers say the children are all smiles when they go to school and are making great efforts to master the material they missed in previous years.

The three Roma children are part of a project for educational mediation initiated within the Community Works Programme in the Municipality of Bitola in 2015. Some thirty children took part and were registered in the educational process, and a number of unemployed people were hired to help them as part-time teachers and assistants.

“The project was aimed at addressing the needs of local Roma children—a very important and numerous target group in this region,” explains Sasho Ilijoski, the municipal coordinator of the Programme. “Because of the grave difficulties encountered by Roma in gaining employment, we prioritised activities to improve Roma education.”

This prioritisation was the outcome of initial field work undertaken by the Municipality in preparation for the Programme. The findings confirmed an alarming number of unregistered Roma children in the local community.

“In the first phase of the project we visited over a hundred Roma households and directly explained the benefits of registering their children and of including them in the educational process,” says Sasho. “And in the meantime we hired local unemployed teachers to implement the educational activities.”

Gorica, Marija and Vesna all trained as teachers for their degrees but had not been able to find work in their chosen careers until the Community Works Programme offered them an opportunity to gain experience as educational mediators.

“The field work was maybe the biggest challenge of all,” says Vesna Talaevska. “We were faced with a lot of mistrust and misunderstanding among the parents at first.

But we persisted in explaining the benefits and finally managed to convince more than twenty parents to let their children attend school.

Once they had won the trust of the parents, the new recruits worked directly with the children, helping them to tackle the daunting task of learning the basics and of making up for lost time at school.

“The main problem is not the children,” says Vesna, “although missing classes remains a problem. What is really holding these kids back is a lack of awareness amongst their parents, many of whom just do not see the importance of education.”

Awareness building among Roma parents is a long-term and sensitive process that also requires the involvement of other entities dedicating to increasing the socio-economic inclusion of Roma. The NGO Sumnal, for example, is now working with children in the area of Petocna Voda in a separate classroom for first and second graders.
The Municipality of Brvenica includes some of the most remote rural settlements in the country, including the tiny village of Gurgurnica on the beautiful slopes of the Suva Gora Mountain.

Delivering social services to such remote communities presents an enormous challenge for the local government, especially with limited municipal resources, which is one of the reasons why some adults in these communities have never received a formal education.

When the Community Works Programme was launched in Brvenica, therefore, the municipality took the bold decision to use the Programme to bring education directly to the villagers of Gurgurnica.

Starting in 2015, the Programme hired two unemployed educators to set up ‘home classrooms’ in several village houses for teaching illiterate Albanian women to read and write in their mother tongue.

“For some time we’d been thinking about how to help this category of women who had dropped out of school and were illiterate in their mother tongue,” says Saubi Daut, the municipal coordinator from the Municipality of Brvenica. “The challenge was even greater because this is a very conservative and isolated environment that is not very open to strangers. Some of the members of the local community were hugely supportive, though, especially those who had experience of working abroad and recognised the value of literacy.”
Albresha Mersimi, a 20-year old student of History, was one of the educators recruited for the project. She and her fellow-educator worked with twenty women from the village and found the experience deeply gratifying and valuable for her future career as a history teacher.

“It was quite a learning experience for us as educators, too,” says Albresha. “We improvised the classes in the village houses and I think we all felt the same sense of achievement as we progressed through the materials. For myself I had the added inspiration that my 70-year old grandmother was never able to write her name. But the women in the village were motivation enough—while as students we were always complaining about homework, these elderly women did theirs uncomplainingly every day without fail!”

One of the beneficiaries in the village, 70-year-old Mersiha, says she speaks for all her fellow students when she describes the experience as worth gold. “Like for a lot of people here, times were hard when I was young and I simply did not finish primary education. I found out about these classes from the municipality and now I can finally write my own name and surname. At the beginning it was hard but gradually it became easier to connect the letters. We didn’t just learn letters, either,” she adds. “We also learned about history and many other things, including the Internet.”
The Community Works Programme in the Municipality of Kumanovo has been underway for three years, working closely with the Roma NGO DROM to design and implement project activities aimed at helping increase the general education level of members of the local Roma community.

Elvira Skenderovska, a 40-year old woman from Kumanovo, has been working with the Programme for two years as an assistant to the activity coordinator for the Roma population. “I really believe we are making a difference to the lives of the Roma population in Kumanovo,” she says.

Drawing on her previous experience in the civil society sector, Elvira has worked on several projects creating activities to promote Roma culture and the Roma language, at the same time acquiring professional experience. “An important part of my job is to talk to the schoolchildren and to help find ways to motivate them to study and to share their culture and traditions.”

Elvira’s ambition is to make use of the work experience she has gained through the Programme to keep on helping improve the lives of Roma people in her home town. “Working on this project has confirmed my main aim in my career: to get Roma children engaged and involved in improving the quality of their lives through education. This is the only way to achieve real integration of Roma in all areas of social and economic life.”
Ahmet Jasharowski, a representative of the NGO DROM, the key partner in the Programme, says that one of the most important aspects of the project is that it shows the Municipality of Kumanovo has recognised the need to design specific social services for this vulnerable community.

“The Programme has achieved two aims at least,” she says, “because it has given a chance for Roma teachers to acquire experience and gain self-confidence in their careers while at the same time helping beneficiaries to study their educational materials.”

Officials from the Municipality of Kumanovo point out a further benefit of the Programme—He experience it has offered in designing an effective model of cooperation with representatives of the project beneficiaries. “Only in coordination with all relevant stakeholders in the community can one create an adequate model for delivering services,” says Ahmet. “We followed that formula, reviewed our past experiences and designed an applicative model that we knew from field work would be accepted by people on the ground. This inclusive aspect is the prerequisite of success.”

I REALLY BELIEVE WE ARE MAKING A DIFFERENCE TO THE LIVES OF THE ROMA POPULATION
REAPING MULTIPLE BENEFITS FROM A SINGLE SOLUTION

Of the many innovative projects implemented as part of the Community Works Programme, the soup kitchen project in the Municipality of Demir Kapija is one of the clearest examples of how a single solution can have multiple beneficiaries.

The project, designed and implemented by the municipality since 2015 in cooperation with the Boris Trajkovski Foundation, has produced direct benefits for some of the poorest people in the municipality, valuable work experience opportunities for long-term unemployed, and improved services for children at one of the local kindergartens at which the soup kitchen operates.

The idea behind the project was to hire two kitchen assistants from amongst local unemployed people to help prepare food. In this way the kindergarten was able to increase the number of pupils it could serve while also helping local people on social welfare by providing them with free food.

“The kitchen operates in the premises of the kindergarten,” explains Natalija Simitrovska, the Principal of the school. “The kitchen staff work hard preparing food for both the children and the people who come to visit us. And parents also donate food that they’ve prepared together with their children—even during the holidays.”
Early each weekday morning some fifteen people on social welfare arrive at the kitchen to pick up food, including warm pies and traditional stews, while on Fridays they receive packages to help them get through the weekend.

One seventy-year-old grandfather says he comes every day to collect food for himself and his wife. “At first it was a bit uncomfortable collecting food because it’s a small town and we all know each other,” he says. “But poverty makes you forget about shame. And at least in this way we are not a burden on our children.”

Kostadinka Velkova is one of the previously unemployed people who gained experience through the project and has since continued working in the kitchen. “As the mother of a child with a disability I am transformed by this positive experience,” she says “It’s been a new start for me and for my family. I come home fulfilled and happy because I know that I’m doing something for myself and my child and for other people in need.”

The Municipality of Demir Kapija plans to continue implementing social services focussed on helping social welfare beneficiaries, aiming eventually also to cater to the needs of many villages in the region. “The way the project made double use of the soup kitchen confirms that this is the way to optimise activities and cover as many vulnerable groups as possible,” says Aneta Ristova, the municipal coordinator of the Programme. “We will continue working like this in the future, involving beneficiaries and stakeholders in designing solutions that maximize our strained municipal resources.”

THE KITCHEN OPERATES IN THE PREMISES OF THE KINDERGARTEN
One of the guiding principles behind the design of projects within the Community Works Programme has been to ensure that the help offered by these projects is targeted to meet the needs of priority groups.

The donations center plays a huge role for people on the margins of society through close cooperation with a Social and Health Care Association called Noble Mission.

“We realised at the outset of the programme that we needed to organise the help we were giving,” explains Anika Georgievska, CWP Coordinator in Kocani of the municipality. “That meant developing more organised treatment and logistical support—making the most of generous donations from individuals and NGOs and ensuring this generosity was not wasted through lack of careful planning.”

The municipality therefore got together with Noble Mission and hired two experienced people from the NGO to operate a donations centre on the outskirts of Kocani dedicated to organising the delivery of donations to the people who most need help.

Surrounded by carefully sorted piles of clothes and shoes organised according to size and age, toys, medical aids, tinned food and other groceries, the two staff hired for the project—Daniela and Mirjana—work at the centre every day compiling a database of all donors and priority beneficiaries, and coordinating the activities of NGOs for delivering the donations. Currently they are working on finding ways to receive donations of furniture and of providing transportation to deliver these items.
“Something that started as a volunteer activity on these premises provided by the municipality turned into an engagement as part of the Community Work Programme,” says Daniela. “The donations centre might look modest but it plays a huge role for people on the margins of society. They come here and together we decide what they need and help to pack and deliver the goods that others provide.”

“We’ve been active in the NGO sector for a long time now,” adds Mirjana, “mostly in helping people from the Roma and Karci ethnic communities. We are dedicated in our work for their integration and we believe we have learnt some lessons and achieved some goals worth sharing with the municipality.”

The partnership between the municipality and the NGO sector in Kocani has also shown the value of employing the experience of dedicated people from civil society to provide real results in the field.
BUILDING COMMUNITIES,
CHANGING LIVES
The Community Works Programme was launched in 2012 and has been hugely successful in achieving its twin aims of tackling social exclusion on two fronts at once.

Implemented by the Government, the municipalities and UNDP, the Programme offers opportunities for unemployed people to gain valuable skills while at the same time providing badly needed social services for the most socially excluded groups in the country.

Over 10,000 people have already felt the benefits from the services provided through this programme, with each municipality launching schemes of part-time work experience in areas such as care for the elderly, services for people with disabilities and early childhood development. This booklet showcases several inspiring stories which have helped build communities and change lives.

For more information, please visit:

www.mtsp.gov.mk
www.avrm.gov.mk
www.mk.undp.org