

HANDBOOK
ON
PARTICIPATORY LOCAL ACTION PLANNING
TO COMBAT POVERTY AND ROMA EXCLUSION

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I. Introduction

The Handbook is prepared as part of the program for 'Transnational Learning on Local Partnerships and Action Plans to Combat Poverty and Roma Exclusion'. The program is co-funded by the European Commission Transnational Exchange Program to Combat Poverty and Social Exclusion, which encourages cooperation among Member States and Candidate Countries. In particular, international exchange and shared learning support the implementation and further development of the National Action Plans to Combat Poverty and Social Exclusion.

The program represents a joint effort of non-governmental organizations working with Roma and local authorities at the grassroots level, and builds on the common learning and working experience of a network of young Roma trained in the Pakiv European Roma Fund initiative.¹ The initiative seeks to widen learning on policies and practices related to social exclusion, especially that of Roma (Gypsies) in Bulgaria, Germany, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia and the United Kingdom.² In particular, the program takes a bottom-up approach to facilitating and identifying local mechanisms for increasing the participation of Roma and local NGOs through the promotion of strategic partnerships and action planning for development.

In analyzing current policies and practices, partners of the program took particular note of the fact that the Central and East European region still lack regulatory frameworks for participatory local action planning. The way in which local authorities, including elected officials, approach Roma issues varies greatly. Personal qualities and capacities of officials, along with the degree of influence among local Roma representatives and civic organizations, can have a decisive role on such processes. Even as new development plans are implemented in the context of European Union accession, Roma are often treated as the objects rather than subjects of projects and programs.

The Handbook advocates participatory approaches to action planning for Roma-related development since Roma are often excluded from such processes. In many situations, they are underrepresented in decisive public bodies and representative councils. For local actors, lack of capacities and experiences with participatory methods are also a challenge to implementing such practices. Furthermore, 'action plans', whether local, national or international, often vary in detail and form a great deal, with no common understanding of how they should be developed and monitored. Therefore, the Handbook seeks to serve as a useful resource for both the public and private sector bodies engaged and responsible for developing adequate strategies and plans for combating poverty and social exclusion.

The Handbook begins with a brief section defining some key concepts, such as poverty, social exclusion and participatory action planning. The section underlines the fact that poverty and social exclusion are complex phenomena, which require holistic approaches beyond mere transfer of funds. The following sections outline the different steps for initiating

¹ Main civic partners of the program include the Autonomia Foundation, Creating Effective Grassroots Alternative, Freudenberg Foundation, Pakiv European Roma Fund, Pakiv-Slovakia, RAA-Berlin and Roma-Lom Foundation. Governmental partners include local municipal and town governments of Braila County, Byala Slatina, Deaj, Iancu Jianu, Lom, Roznava, Spišska Nova Ves, the Roma Minority Self-government of Barcs and Szirak

² Aspects of social exclusion discussed in the context of exchange have included segregated education and low educational attainment levels, low level skills and adapting to competitive labor markets, high concentration in disadvantaged regions, substandard housing and infrastructure, poor health, unequal access to information, and widespread prejudice and discrimination.

a participatory action planning process, preparing a concrete action plan, budget and follow-up monitoring of progress on implementation. These sections rely heavily on already existing handbooks on participatory action planning, especially those developed for CIVICUS.³ In addition to outline the steps for action planning, the Handbook also draws on some specific examples and experiences regarding Roma in Central and Eastern Europe. In particular, the handbook considers the need for developing integrated local action plans, formed of sub-plans developed for each relevant sector.

II. Key Concepts: social exclusion, poverty, participatory action planning

a. Social exclusion

By now there is considerable recognition that a significant proportion of Roma are confronted with or at serious risk of becoming socially excluded. Social exclusion may be understood as the alienation of certain people within a society. It is often connected to a person's social class, educational status and living standards and how these might affect their **access to various opportunities**... To be "excluded from society" ... is usually defined as more than a simple economic phenomenon: it also has social consequences; at times treated as if they are invisible, and excluded from participating fully in the social and political life.

The problem of social exclusion is usually tied to the problem of equal opportunity, as some people are more subject to such exclusion than others. Social inclusion, its converse, is affirmative action to change the circumstances and habits that lead to (or have led to) social exclusion.

b. Poverty and factors of poverty

This handbook takes into consideration a complex understanding of poverty, beyond mere economic indicators such as income. Poverty has been described as "a human condition characterized by the **sustained or chronic deprivation of the resources, capabilities, choices, security and power** necessary for the enjoyment of an adequate standard of living and other civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights."⁴

"Poverty . . . includes **sustained low levels of income** for members of a community. It includes a **lack of access to services** like education, markets, health care, **lack of decision making ability**, and **lack of communal facilities** like water, sanitation, roads, transportation, and communications.

Furthermore, it is a "**poverty of spirit**," that allows members of that community to believe in and share despair, hopelessness, apathy, and timidity. Poverty, especially the factors that contribute to it, is a social problem, and its solution is social. The simple transfer of funds, even if it is to the victims of poverty, will not eradicate or reduce poverty. It will merely alleviate the symptoms of poverty in the short run. It is not a durable solution."⁵

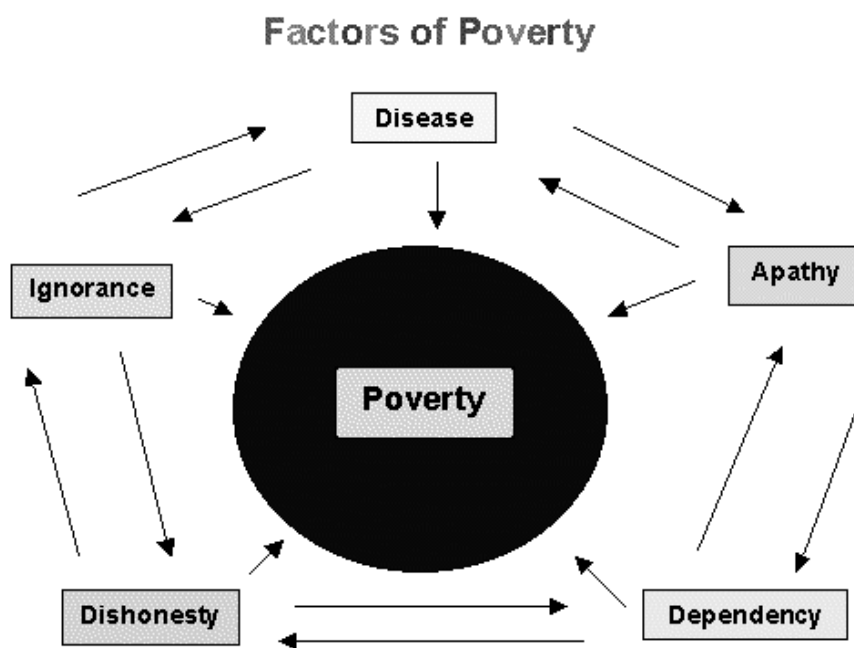
In developing strategies and plans for Roma-related development, it is also important to consider what have been defined as '**factors of poverty**', **which are conditions that can**

³ In particular, the Handbook on Action Planning developed by Janet Shapiro for CIVICUS. www.civicus.org, and Handbook for trainers on participatory local development developed by S.P. Jain & Wim Polman.

⁴ <http://www.unhchr.ch/development/poverty-02.html>

⁵ Handbook for Mobilizers, Phil Bartle, 2005. <http://www.scn.org/cmp/hbmob.htm>

often be found within impoverished communities. In the experience of organizations of the Transnational Partnership to Combat Poverty and Roma Exclusion, such factors are important to address and overcome if development efforts are to be sustainable. In particular, reference is often made to problems of apathy and dependency within excluded groups and communities.



IGNORANCE means having a lack of information, or lack of knowledge

When a community has a high **DISEASE** rate, absenteeism is high, productivity is low, and less wealth is created.

APATHY is when people do not care, or when they feel so powerless that they do not try to change things, to right a wrong, to fix a mistake, or to improve conditions. Sometimes . . . they are jealous of their family relatives or fellow members of their community who attempt to do so. Then they seek to bring the attempting achiever down to their own level of poverty. Apathy breeds apathy.

DEPENDENCY results from being on the receiving end of charity. . . .It is an attitude, a belief, that one is so poor, so helpless, that one can not help one's self, that a group cannot help itself, and that it must depend on assistance from outside.

When resources that are intended to be used for community services or facilities are diverted into the private pockets of someone in a position of power, there is more than morality at stake here... **DISHONESTY** among persons of trust and power is a major cause of poverty.⁶

⁶ Ibid.

c. Participatory action planning

Participatory planning is a **process** by which a **community works actively to fulfill a given socio-economic goal by consciously defining its problems and planning a course of action to resolve those problems**. Usually, experts are needed, but only as facilitators. Moreover, no one likes to participate in something which is not of his/her own creation. Plans prepared by outside experts, irrespective of their technical soundness, cannot inspire the people to participate in their implementation.⁷

The term 'action planning' refers to the process that guides the day-to-day activities of an organization, program or project. It is the **process of planning what needs to be done, when it needs to be done, by whom it needs to be done and what resource or inputs are needed to do it**. It is the process of operationalizing one's strategic objectives.⁸

d. Principles of participatory planning

Since this handbook stresses the importance of *participatory* planning, we draw attention to some of the key principles of participatory approaches and methods.

1. Development should be seen more as a **change from the bottom up** than from top down.

2. The development process should be managed as a **natural organic process** rather than according to plans, goals, objectives, targets and schedules. Goals and targets may change and, therefore, their timing should be **tentative and flexible to make room for adaptation to local conditions**.

3. Development programs should **aim to strengthen local organizations** and not state and central government bureaucracies; they should be chosen according to their ability to increase local development management capacity. Start with a few actions to solve some immediate local problems to **build local confidence and experience**.

4. The development process is supported by local institutions with ... religious, youth, community-based and self-help groups playing a lead role. It is more important to make sure that the **development process is rooted in a strong local institution** than ensuring that local institutions have a grasp of all the finer technical points. It is comparatively easier to arrange technical services from outside than to bring about social involvement and willing popular participation in the development process. Strong local institutions are necessary as support posts quite independently of whatever technical skills and other background they may have.

5. It follows from the above that the **development process must be based primarily on confidence and learning rather than on experts and training**. It is more important for the people who will take decisions at the local level to have full confidence of the people they represent, than to be trained experts. This also implies that technical staff of departments should work in tandem with local institutions rather than simply judge the plans prepared by these institutions.⁹

⁷ S.P. Jain & Wim Polman, 'A handbook for trainers on participatory local development - The *Panchayati Raj* model in India - Second Edition', Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific. Bangkok, 2003.

⁸ Janet Shapiro, Action Planning Toolkit, CIVICUS.

⁹ European Dialogue, 'Promoting Roma Integration at the Local Level. Practical guidance for NGOs and public authorities', 2005.

6. Participatory planning is a process **based on open dialogue** where all the partners recognize diversity, respect differences, and social actors are seen as active subjects in their own development.¹⁰

e. The local and micro-regional levels

The handbook also focuses on *local action planning*, since it is at this level that implementation of the various national strategies and action plans concerning Roma, poverty and social exclusion should take place. Since the conditions (resources, strengths, weaknesses) differ from locality to locality, **implementation of national-level strategies and plans need to be adapted to local needs**. It is at this level that the everyday lives of people in disadvantaged conditions must change, and **public services are also predominantly administered and delivered at the local, municipal level**.

In their guidance manual on promoting Roma integration at the local level, the European Dialogue draws attention to key local actors that should be engaged in the process:

Elected municipal authorities have a crucial role as the democratically-elected representatives of the local population. They have important powers and responsibilities, often relating to a wide range of functions (e.g. housing, social welfare, education). They are often major local employers... In some countries, **regional administrations of the central government** have an important role. They too may be responsible for key functions and services at the local level, and can help to ensure that national government policy on Roma issues is translated into practice at the local level.

Authorities concerned with education, health, welfare, housing, policing and criminal justice will be particularly important. **Local Roma NGOs** are also essential because they can articulate the interests and concerns of local Roma, and promote and support their participation in the civic process generally.

Other civic organizations able to make important contributions can be those working on human rights, legal advice and community development. **Private businesses** can also have a role to play, as they are local employers and may provide some services.¹¹

At the same time, in the context of development within the European Union, the **micro-regional level** has gained particular importance, as the administrative unit for some Structural Fund assistance. In this case, **participatory planning processes should be carried out with a bottom-up approach**. This can be done by engaging and planning activities among relevant actors, especially Roma, at the local levels first. Following this, action planning at the micro-regional levels can take place, based on local level results.

III. Initiating a Participatory Action Planning Process¹²

a. Identify local needs, particularly of excluded families

- The best way to find what people need and what they see as possible solutions to

¹⁰ Traditional Planning Models vs. Participatory Planning, <http://www.comminit.com/socialchange/pmodels/planningmodels-93.html>

¹¹ European Dialogue, 'Promoting Roma Integration at the Local Level. Practical guidance for NGOs and public authorities', 2005. Pgs. 17-18.

¹² This section is based on S.P. Jain & Wim Polman, 'A handbook for trainers on participatory local development - The *Panchayati Raj* model in India - Second Edition', Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific. Bangkok, 2003. CIVICUS, Action Planning Toolkit by Janet Shapiro. <http://www.civicus.org>

their problems is to **ask them directly**. This also creates awareness and willingness among the people to take part in any action that will follow.

- Before asking what they want, **it is necessary to establish a common ground of understanding with them**. There are bound to be conflicting interests within a community. Special skills and sincerity are needed to build consensus.
- It is important to **ensure a broad-based network of community support** for a development initiative targeting Roma and other disadvantaged. Local actors such as public authorities, informal Roma leaders, community based organizations, field workers of non-profit organizations, teachers, women, and retired people should be involved in the consultations and discussions.

Needs Assessment for an Economic Development Strategy in Lom, Bulgaria

The Roma-Lom Foundation (RLF) is a non-governmental, private foundation established in 1995. RLF is a well established Roma civic organization with permanent operations in the fields of education, employment, health, social services, regional capacity building and networking. Their programs address both Roma and non-Roma in disadvantaged situations.

In 2002, the foundation initiated a process for developing an economic strategy of the municipality of Lom. The process was based on the already existing relations among the foundation, the municipality, local businesses and representatives of different banks in Lom, who had worked together on other programs related to employment. In 2002, the foundation invited representatives from the above institutions to come together and create working group to discuss how conditions for starting and developing successful businesses in Lom could be improved.

The working group was an informal structure formed of 11 persons: 1 from the economic department of the municipality, 1 from the labor bureau, 1 representative of DSK bank, 5 local businesses, 1 representative of the media and 2 from the foundation. The working group decided that its first task should be to carry out a needs and problems assessment of local businesses.

The assessment was done through a survey that was made with 80 persons from different backgrounds. The main problems were lack of information on available credit lines, the market, and conditions for developing businesses in the context of European Union membership. Furthermore, inadequate services provided by the municipal administration, and the difficulties created by taxes, licenses and patent fees, etc. were also mentioned. The working group also assessed its own needs, finding that they should increase their capacities in areas such as team work, communication skills, developing business plans, market research and computer literacy.

On the basis of the problem analysis, the working group formulated a number of recommendations and strategies, which were submitted to the municipal council. All the suggestions were included in the economic development strategy. As a follow-up to this process a formal group for economic development was established and the municipal administration also opened a new section for economic development. Since then, a number of active measures to support local businesses have been carried out with the support of the labor bureau, and a new economic development strategy for the period 2007-2013 has also been approved.¹³

b. Collect basic data

- Once local contacts are established, the next step is to collect basic data about the community, characteristics of the area, resources, socio-economic status and other relevant facts.
- The aim is to get a **factual baseline picture** which will help in setting goals and measuring changes brought about by the actions at a later stage.

¹³ This example is also presented in Jennifer Tanaka, 'Local Partnerships to Combat Poverty and Roma Exclusion - Case Studies', July 2006.

- It is helpful at this stage to **work with various local officials and NGO functionaries** in collecting and verifying facts from different sources.
- To seek people's cooperation, it is important to **respect their ideas and abilities**.
- **Participatory rural appraisal (PRA)** is a practical tool for participatory data collection and analysis. PRA describes a growing family of approaches and methods to enable local people to share, improve and analyze their knowledge of life and conditions, to plan and to act for change. Participatory methods include mapping and modeling, transect walks, matrix scoring, seasonal calendars, trend and change analysis, well-being and wealth ranking and grouping, and analytical diagramming.¹⁴

Steps for obtaining data on the current situation of Roma

- Identify any existing data relating to Roma e.g. information from the population census, any relevant data held by public authorities, and any previous study of the situation of Roma or minorities locally.*
- Establish what additional information is needed e.g. regarding housing conditions, employment, education, etc.*
- Identify methods that can be used to collect this data, e.g. through door-to-door interviews, surveys, meetings, etc.*
- Implement these methods, using low-cost approaches such as recruiting Roma volunteers or school students to carry out the work.*
- Write up a report summarizing the results, which can then be used as the base-line for measuring future progress.*¹⁵



¹⁴ Robert Chambers, 'The Origins and Practice of Participatory Rural Appraisal', World Development, Volume 22, Issue 7, July 1994, pgs. 953-969.

¹⁵ European Dialogue, 'Promoting Roma Integration at the Local Level - practical guidance for NGOs and public authorities', 2005. pg. 63-64.

c. Set up working groups

- It is helpful to form working groups that include local officials, to **prepare action plans, status reports and to develop perspectives**. Local civic organizations working with Roma have found it is useful to set up sector-specific working groups (e.g. education, employment, health, etc.) for developing strategies and concrete action plans.
- **Government must be open**, sensitive and responsive and must institutionalize the partnership at appropriate levels; **NGOs must be open** to collaboration with the government, share risks and be creative.
- The aim of the working groups is to analyze and compare data, draw inferences and identify priority areas for intervention. The **existence of the working groups should contribute to greater clarity and strengthening of participation of local people**, particularly the rural excluded. It should give them greater local planning responsibility and help establish good working relationship between technical planning experts and the local people. Detailed specification of the roles of participants, groups and committees in carrying out the tasks is very important.
- **Conflicts and disagreements may arise** in the process, which are not in themselves a negative factor, but have to be properly resolved and managed at every stage of decision-making. There is need for a clear expression of interest and aspiration on both sides.
- When setting up and working in such groups, some important principles and dynamics of working in partnership are important to have in mind. **Trust is the most important when a partnership crosses many boundaries** - interpersonal, inter-institutional, cross cultural - at the same time. These are the conditions of mixed working groups formed of Roma representatives, civic representations and public institutions, and where **efficient communication is crucial** for increasing mutual trust.¹⁶



¹⁶ It is also worth noting the UK Commission for Racial Equality's guidelines on race equality strategies including that on 'Public Authorities and Partnerships – A guide to the duty to promote race equality.' The guide sets out concrete steps for ensuring race equality when building partnerships. www.cre.gov.uk

- Any partnership involves rights and obligations. **It is a major challenge when one partner has the resources and the other has to ask for it**, or one has the power to decide who gets funds and how much, and the other is accountable for their use. There is no fully satisfactory answer to this dilemma. Local people, particularly the rural poor, must develop skills in negotiation and claim-making to effectively engage the government in participatory local development planning and partnership-building.

Forming a working group for developing an educational strategy for integration of Roma children in Kyustendil, Bulgaria

Nevo Drom (New Road) Association

The Nevo Drom association is a community based organization, which had been carrying out educational activities in Kyustendil. Their activities form part of the national network of community-based organizations stimulated by the Creating Effective Grassroots Alternatives (C.E.G.A.) organization based in Sofia. Having worked in the area of education for many years, forming the working group for developing the municipal educational strategy for Roma was not so difficult; it was based on already existing partnerships with school directors and the head of the Educational Department.

The members of the working group were: 7 directors of primary and high schools, one representative from the Regional Inspectorate of the Ministry of Education and Science, the mayor of the town, 1 representative from the Department of Child Protection, 1 representative of the Commission for Combating Anti-social Behaviors of Youth and the team of the Nevo Drom (Roma) Association.

Over a period of about 3 months, the members of the working group met at least once every two weeks to discuss the draft strategy. However, the team of the association had daily meetings with members of the working group on an individual basis. The working group meetings took place in the building of the Educational Department in Kyustendil. The division of roles and responsibilities was a relatively spontaneous process. Each member of the working group defined what he or she could do and what is not in his or her capacity.



d. Define objectives

- The first step in participatory local planning is to define precisely what specific objectives are to be achieved. These should be stated in **concrete terms**, for example increasing i) incomes of identified households, ii) production of certain crops and iii) enrollment in primary school.
- The objective may not always be quantifiable, particularly when it involves attitudinal changes. Its still helps to **be as specific as possible so that people can see how much change has taken place.**

e. Decide upon the strategy

Before making the action plan, you need to reach agreement on the strategy for fulfilling your objectives. The best way to do this is to organize brainstorming sessions to **identify possible options and decide which make the most sense.** In doing so, you will need to consider the advantages and disadvantages of each option, staff capacities, cost, and timing, amongst others.

- In strategizing, you will need to **prioritize your actions both within and among sectors.** It may be that **some cases are preconditions for the success of other actions.** For example:
 - Regularizing the legal status of Roma housing should normally be addressed before housing renovation.
 - Ensuring the Roma have valid ID cards will normally be a pre-requisite for ensuring that they can access health, welfare and other services.
 - Providing 'second chance' education for Roma who did not complete basic education, along with possible vocational training, will be a prerequisite for enabling Roma to access employment opportunities.¹⁷
- Also, it is important to have **relatively quick, visible results in the beginning.** This



¹⁷ European Dialogue, 'Promoting Roma Integration at the Local Level, practical guidance for NGOs and public authorities', 2005. pg. 63-64.

is particularly the case if mobilizing and development initiatives are new for the community. This can help secure support for the local action plan, in terms of building confidence and trust that the process can produce real social change. For example:

- Organizing a community cleaning initiative.
- Creating a local sports or play area.
- Improving access to public transportation.
- One of the most difficult parts of participatory local planning involves **assessing and mobilizing needed resources and choosing the planning methods**. It is important to specify:
 - Resources that are locally available and those needed from outside (e.g. people with skills, funds, raw material inputs, etc.);
 - If resources are available when needed; and
 - Who should be approached, who will approach and with whose help to secure these.
- Consider **alternative local planning methods and approaches** such as whether to:
 - Contract a job to private individuals or do it on a cooperative or community basis;
 - Focus on several small household-based units or one big unit; and
 - Train local people as trainers for the jobs or to hire trained personnel from outside.
- Once a course of action is chosen, it should be **explained and specified in clear terms to avoid confusion and misunderstanding** among the local stakeholders.

Developing an educational strategy for integration of Roma children in Kuystendil, Bulgaria

Nevo Drom (New Road) Association

Based on the existing experiences with educational activities, the association proposed the main documents needed for developing the strategy. The data, the research and analysis of problems, and the proposed activities were prepared by the association before creating the working group. Therefore, the whole process was relatively short, taking only 3 months for the strategy to be adopted by the municipal council.



Roma participation in the development of the strategy wasn't small. The regional and municipal Experts on Ethnic and Demographic issues, the Roma leader of the community, the 2 local councilors as well the whole community were consulted in and supported the process. Everybody knew that, due to the association's activities in the sphere of education, most of the Roma children were studying in mainstream, integrated schools. Recognition and legitimacy of the association contributed to the general support of the strategy.

Before approving the strategy, it was first sent to the educational commission of the municipality, where the chairman of the association had the opportunity to defend it. Although many councilors had negative attitudes, the strategy was approved unanimously. In part this was due to the fact that the association had individual meetings to convince each political power in the municipal council.

Following adoption of the strategy, the association also initiated the same process for adopting the action plan of the educational strategy. Currently, the local municipality gives financial support to transport the children to school, and the association continues to lobby local authorities to take over financing activities of the action plan. The association found it extremely helpful to be well prepared with a draft strategy before initiating the working group, otherwise the process risked to be too long. Furthermore, it was necessary to lobby institutions and political representatives for support of the process and Roma-related strategies, since they may actually lack capacities and real interest to do it themselves.



f. Ensure feasibility

- The working groups at this point should consider whether **the objectives are realistic**. It is important to ensure that:
 - Assumptions and stipulations regarding the availability of resources, managerial competence and technical expertise are realistic;
 - Proposed activities are economically viable; and
 - Local market can absorb the expected outputs.
- It is important to identify potential project beneficiaries and check how the benefits would flow to them.

Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs)

One interesting model looked at in the Transnational Exchange Program was that of Local Strategic Partnerships in the UK. LSPs are institutional arrangements aimed at stimulating participation in efforts to reduce the gap in disadvantaged communities. In short a Local Strategic Partnership is a body that:

- *involves various people;*
- *is a frame for others to participate in the partnership relation;*
- *is responsible for developing and driving the implementation of Community Strategies*
- *is responsible for agreeing on the allocation of funding and helping to 'narrow the gap'¹⁸*

The structural composition of the partnerships usually include:

Forum - usually with open membership, meeting only once or twice a year, but bringing together a wide range of stakeholders;

Board - serving as the formal body which partners sign up and which through some form of constitution makes up the LSP.

Executive - smaller than the Board and made up largely of officers who fulfill decisions or carry out actions,

Theme group - often structured in partnerships, taking forward either particular service area themes (health, learning, etc.) or cross-cutting themes like inclusion, sustainability, youth),

Task groups - charged with specific functions to support LSPs,

Community forums - which could receive support from a separate Community Empowerment Fund to bring together teams of community development workers, local community organizations and resident groups.

Local Strategic Partnerships are key to improving social cohesion, the relationship between different communities in an area and their relationship with state authorities. They also strengthen connections with, and between, public sector agencies, local government, the voluntary and community sectors, businesses and local residents.

There are currently over 360 Local Strategic Partnerships in England. To learn more about Local Strategic Partnerships in the UK, including some of the challenges of implementation and effectiveness, see <http://www.neighbourhood.gov.uk/>



¹⁸ ODFM, LSP Evaluation and Action Research Programme – Case-Studies interim report: A baseline of practice, May 2004.

IV. Preparing the Action Plan ¹⁹

Action planning is something you do whenever you know what you want to achieve and you need a plan to spell out the activities required to achieve it. The action plan itself, also referred as operational or work plan, usually **consists of the following elements**:

- A statement of **what must be achieved** (the outputs or result areas that come out of the strategic planning process);
- A spelling out of **the steps that have to be followed** to reach this objective;
- Some kind of **time schedule** for when each step must take place and how long it is likely to take place (when);
- A clarification of **who will be responsible** for making sure that each step is successfully completed (who);
- A **clarification of the inputs/resources** that are needed.

Integrated local action plans for Roma inclusion should set out a sequence of interconnected actions designed to bridge the gap between the desired results and the current reality.²⁰ The scope of the action plan should include all the relevant fields for developing an integrated solution. These should normally include:

- Education and vocational training.
- Income and employment opportunities
- Small business development
- Housing and environment
- Health



¹⁹ Section based on CIVICUS, Action Planning Toolkit by Janet Shapiro. <http://www.civicus.org>

²⁰ See also European Dialogue, 'Promoting Roma Integration at the Local Level, practical guidance for NGOs and public authorities', 2005

- Social welfare
- Security and policing
- Political and civic participation
- Needs of particular groups, e.g. women, young people, etc.

Basic Action Plan Model for one result area:

| Field of action: | | | | |
|------------------------|---------------|----------------|--------------------|---|
| Result area: | | | | |
| Indicator: | | | | |
| Means of verification: | | | | |
| Progress indicator: | | | | |
| Activities/Steps | Time schedule | | Person responsible | Resources required (human, money, material) |
| | When to start | When to finish | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |
| | | | | |

a. Set an agenda

Planning an agenda for an action planning process is very different from planning an agenda for a strategic planning process. In a strategic planning process it is important to take people through a strategic thinking exercise which helps them to focus on the big picture. In an **action planning process the focus is on the detail, on making sure that things happen as they are supposed to and on time.**

Typical agenda for an action planning process

1. Clarify the result areas on which you will be working; 'what you want to achieve'.
2. For each result area, list the steps necessary to achieve it.
3. Sequence the steps in logical order using a tool such as the Gantt Chart (see section (d) below).
4. Do a summary of the outputs.
5. Assign responsibility for each of the activities involved.
6. Do a summary of the human resource needs.
7. Do a summary of the likely costs.
8. Put it all together in a work plan schedule.

b. Clarify the result areas you will be working on

Within the selected field of action, you will first need to clarify each specific 'result area'. This means 'what' in particular the activities are supposed to achieve. Each result area will help you to achieve your overall objectives and goals. Once the specific result areas have

been clarified, the group should then identify an indicator for its successful achievement, and the 'means of verification' or way of showing that the indicator has been achieved.

Field of action: Education.

Result area: All under-qualified primary school teachers upgrade their qualifications.

Indicator: The teachers complete the program and meet the requirements for upgrading.

Means of verification: Survey at the end of the period through the schools.

c. Identify activities

The activities are the steps that you need to take in order to obtain the results. The general way or idea for achieving your results has already been decided in your strategy session, but now you need to break it down into concrete steps or activities. One effective way of doing this is to organize a brainstorming session amongst team members:

1. Distribute cards/small pieces of paper to each person.
2. Ask each person to write down the critical steps, the things that must happen if the result required is to be achieved through the agreed strategy.
3. Place the cards or pieces of paper on a wall.
4. Organize or cluster the cards in sequence – the order that makes sense for doing each step.
5. Check that no critical steps are missing. If any are, add cards.
6. Consolidate the steps in your basic action planning model.

d. Specify the timing when activities should take place

Once all the critical steps for achieving the desired result have been identified, you then need to work out **how long each activity/step will take and by when it needs to happen**. When you are reasonably familiar with how long certain tasks usually take, you can be fairly definite about time needed. Where they are less familiar, allow for some flexibility in case they have been under calculated.

Then, all activities should be put together to make sure there are no significant clashes or overlaps. A useful way to do this is the use the **Gantt Chart** (named after its inventor Henry Gantt).²¹

1. Identify what unit of time you will use (months, weeks, or quarters for example). Create a table with that number of columns and label each column.

2. Add another column to the chart. Place one activity from the action plan in each row of the first column.

²¹ Section based on Olive, Planning for Implementation, in CIVICUS Action Planning Toolkit by Janet Shapiro.

3. Illustrate in the chart when each of the activities will be carried out. You can visualize in different ways, for example, using:

- light shade for activities that are not full time, and carried out during a defined, ongoing period of time;
- solid color to illustrate activities carried out continuously over a certain period;
- different colors for different result areas or goals;
- symbols to indicate activities taking place at intervals (such as report writing)

| | Jan | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | June | July | Aug | Sept | Oct | Nov | Dec |
|------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|------|-----|------|-----|-----|-----|
| Activity 1 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Activity 2 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Activity 3 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Activity 4 | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Activity 5 | | | * | | | * | | | * | | | * |

e. Specify who will be responsible

Allocating responsibility for specific activities will help ensure that they are carried out as planned. It is also important that responsible persons have the necessary authority to fulfill their tasks. In deciding who should be responsible for a particular activity, you should take into account the following:

- The experience, skills, capabilities, confidence needed to do the task.
- Who has time to do the task when it needs to be done, as well as the ability to do it?
- The willingness of someone to do a job or learn a job.
- If there is no one on the team with both the ability and the time, you may need to contract short-term support. If the job is more complex you may decide to hire someone, or, as a longer-term investment, to train one or more of your staff members to do the work.
- In addition to the ‘responsible person’, it is also useful to specify the roles of other persons, such as those with ‘authorization responsibility’ (if different), those to be ‘involved in the activity’, and those ‘to be consulted’.

f. Clarify inputs and resources needed

The resources or inputs that are normally needed for activities are:

- Finances.
- People.
- Materials.
- Services.
- Transport.

Common mistakes in action planning

- *Planning to do too much in too short a time;*
- *Not planning your activities in enough detail;*
- *Not work out time-lines to make sure that your sequencing and scheduling makes sense;*
- *Not making it absolutely clear who has responsibility and authority for making sure that all steps get done;*
- *Not thinking through the resource implications thoroughly and accurately.*

Basic Action Plan Model

| Field of Action: Education Result area: All under-qualified primary school teachers upgrade their qualifications Indicator: Teachers complete training course program and meet the requirements for upgrading Means of verification: Survey at the end of the period | | | |
|---|---------------|-------------------------------|--|
| Activities/Steps | Time schedule | | Resources required (human, money, material) |
| | When to start | When to finish | |
| 1. Contact all schools and request lists of under-qualified teachers and their subject specialties. | September | October | Phone and email costs, Laura's time. |
| 2. Follow-up with schools. | | Last week October | Phone, email, Laura's time. |
| 3. Contact tertiary (higher education) institutions for details of relevant courses and invite them to an Open Day, where under-qualified teachers can discuss options with them. | September | October | Phone, email, David's time. |
| 4. Book a venue and do logistical organization for the Open Day. | November | November | Venue cost, photocopies, phone, email and Kati's time. |
| 5. Follow-up with tertiary institutions and draw up list of possible courses. | | By end November | David's time, email, phone. |
| 6. Distribute the list to schools, with an invitation to Open Day. | | Early December | Email and Kati's time. |
| 7. Confirm number for attendance at Open Day with schools. | | January | Email, telephone and Kati's time. |
| 8. Prepare feedback forms to be completed by the tertiary institutions and potential students after Open Day. | | By end January | Laura's time, photocopy costs. |
| 9. Organize refreshments for Open Day. | | Mid-February | Refreshment costs, Kati's time. |
| 10. Host Open Day - should be welcome speech and team to discuss issues. | | 3 rd week February | Maria and David's time, other staff present, transportation costs. |
| 11. Collect forms at the end of Open Day. | | At Open Day | Already covered. |
| 12. Do follow-up – thank institutions, analyze forms. | | Last week Feb. | Laura and David's time, email. |
| 13. ... | | | |

(CIVICUS, Action Planning Toolkit by Janet Shapiro)

V. Preparing the Budget²²

A budget is a document that translates plans into money - money that will need to be spent to get your planned activities done (expenditures) and money that will need to be generated to cover the costs of getting the work done (income). It is an estimate, or informed guess, about what you will need in monetary terms to do your work.

Both the material and human resources should be given a monetary cost. The cost is further broken down in terms of **period of time and also in terms of availability** - whether locally available or to be secured from outside. In this regards, the budget can also tell you **when** you will need certain amounts of money to carry out your activities.

In preparing your budget for complex or integrated action plans, it will be useful to draw up separate budgets according to **cost centers**. A cost center is a grouping of activities that make a coherent financial unit. Therefore, in a complex educational program, each separate project may be a cost center.

Steps:

1. **List the items on which you spend money.** Group them under headings (*operational costs*, such as direct actions, and *organizational costs*, such as management, overhead office costs, etc.) or cost centers.

2. **Estimate the unit cost** of the line items and then the total costs per year. For example:

| Activity: Capacity building training on local action planning | | | |
|---|--|---|------------------------------------|
| Item | Unit cost | Quantity | Total cost of item |
| • Materials | <i>The unit cost is the cost of a single item, or one unit</i> | <i>This is the number of units (how many) you will need for the activity.</i> | |
| • Equipment | | | |
| • Services - Trainers - Room rental | <i>(cost per day)</i> | <i>(number of days)</i> | |
| • Transportation | | | |
| Total cost for the activity: | | | Sum of all individual costs |

(Olive publications, in CIVICUS Toolkit on Budgeting)

3. **List your likely sources of income** or revenue. Categorize them. These may include: promised, probable or possible donations, central budget allocations, income from sales, membership fees, etc.

4. **Prepare your budget format.** This might be provided by a specific donor or should be designed based on your needs and headings. It should make allowance for both income and expenditures. It should also reflect the categories and line items you decided are important, and allow for sub-totals. Generally, yearly budget can be broken down into more detailed, monthly expenditures, and an overall, consolidated budget provides headings or totals per year.

5. **Insert actual costs into your budget, and add up your sub-totals and overall totals.** Then calculate whether you have a surplus or excess.

²² Based on CIVICUS Toolkit on Budgeting. www.civicus.org

Costs that are often forgotten

- *Start-up costs – for a new organization or project, such as recruitment, moving in, building alterations, launching the project.*
- *Research and development – consultation, needs assessment, planning processes.*
- *Democracy and governance – establishing the structures, recruiting for them, getting a constitution developed and accepted, training volunteers.*
- *Marketing or public relations – building a professional image.*
- *Replacement of capital goods (computers, equipment).*
- *Monitoring and evaluation costs for projects.*

Example of a Consolidated Yearly Budget

| Field of Action and Activity | Year 1 | Year 2 | Year 3 |
|--|--------|--------|--------|
| EDUCATION | | | |
| Income | | | |
| Budget allocations | | | |
| central | | | |
| local | | | |
| Grants | | | |
| probable | | | |
| promised | | | |
| Total Income | | | |
| Expenditures | | | |
| Activity 1 – Training of primary school teachers | | | |
| Activity 2 – Organizing after-school programs | | | |
| Activity 3 – Infrastructure development of primary school x | | | |
| Management (like salaries, donor liaison, fundraising, etc.) | | | |
| Administration (like salaries, equipment, software, office supplies) | | | |
| Governance and organizational/working group development | | | |
| Overheads (office rental, utilities, legal fees, etc.) | | | |
| EDUCATION – TOTAL EXPENDITURES | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |

VI. Monitoring Implementation

Monitoring in the context of local action planning refers to the ongoing assessment of how the actual implementation is being realized in comparison to the original plans. This includes questions such as:

- Are outputs being achieved within the timeframes set?
- Are resources being efficiently and effectively used?
- Are we doing what we said we would do and if not, why?

- Are work groups meeting their objectives?
- Are the individuals meeting their objectives?

During the planning stage, you need to identify the indicators for achieving your objectives. This means looking for the evidence to show progress in activities, which will also be useful later for reflecting on efficiency, effectiveness and impact. This usually involves posing questions, such as:

- How many?
- How well?
- How often?
- Who benefited?
- How did they benefit?

In order to answer these questions, you will need to identify what information must be collected for regular, internal monitoring. The following questions can be useful in the process:

- What sort of information do we need?
- How will we use the information?
- How can it be collected with the least possible trouble?
- Who will collect it?
- Who will analyze it?

Some common resources for gathering information throughout implementation include letters, reports, plans, contracts, attendance lists, invoices, minutes of meetings, questionnaires, focus groups, and stories or testimonies of people. Once collected, the information must then be **analyzed**. In doing so, you are **looking for the unexpected, and trying to understand and learn from differences**. This way you can improve your practice next time. One way of analyzing is:

| Activity: Capacity building training on local action planning | | | |
|---|--|---|------------------------------------|
| Item | Unit cost | Quantity | Total cost of item |
| • Materials | <i>The unit cost is the cost of a single item, or one unit</i> | <i>This is the number of units (how many) you will need for the activity.</i> | |
| • Equipment | | | |
| • Services - Trainers - Room rental | <i>(cost per day)</i> | <i>(number of days)</i> | |
| • Transportation | | | |
| Total cost for the activity: | | | Sum of all individual costs |

(Olive publications, in CIVICUS Toolkit on Budgeting)

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