

Solidarity with evicted Roma families leads to local development initiatives



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Following the eviction of 73 Roma families in Cluj-Napoca, northwest Romania, a set of coordinated interventions were developed. These were initiated in cooperation with a wide range of local development actors, including, most importantly, the communities concerned.



Pata-Rât is a spatially segregated, informal, urban settlement near the landfill on the outskirts of Cluj-Napoca (population: 300 000) where currently around 300 families are living. It is composed of four separate parts that were formed during the last 20 years through repeated evictions of poor, mainly Roma families, from central areas of the city. Some of these families were originally from rural areas, but migrated to the city for work. For more than half of them, working in selective waste collection on the landfill provides their main means of subsistence.

Combating ghettoisation

On the 17 December 2010, almost overnight, 73 Roma families were evicted from the city centre and relocated in Pata-Rât, and their old homes demolished. A strong civil movement was catalysed around the Foundation Desire and the Association Amare Phrala in opposition to such 'Roma ghettoisation' in the city and demanding social justice. With the support of activists and academics, this movement led to the creation of the Working Group of Civil Society Organisations (www.gloc.ro) in January 2011. The following year a set of

coordinated interventions were launched under the coordination of the Municipality of Cluj and a local team from United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

A strong grassroots initiative formed in response to the most urgent needs, namely to offer support and safety to the children living near the landfill. A volunteer group made up of students and experts organised the first Children's Tent on the landfill in 2012 and offered regular educational and leisure activities to the most vulnerable children in the area. The initiative was supported by the Social and Medical Services Directorate of the Municipality.

Education and community-centred activities

In the summer of 2013, Fundatia pentru Dezvoltarea Popoarelor launched a project for the children from the landfill and the two teams merged. Currently, they offer educational and childcare activities in a mobile day care centre run by the municipality near the landfill.

Moreover, in 2012 the community evicted from the city centre established an NGO, the Community Association of Roma from

Coastei, with the support of activists and human rights organisations, and took concrete steps to improve their living conditions. Among other successes, the NGO constructed a community centre in only three weeks, using their own resources, manpower and mostly local donations.

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