Capacity Building for Romani Health Equity: A Mental Health Model

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Does Romani Mental Health Matter?

- Reduce poverty
- Promote participation
- Fight antigypsyism
- Dignified housing conditions
- Access to quality healthcare
- Access to quality education
- Access to quality employment
- Access to quality healthcare
- Dignified housing conditions
- Fight antigypsyism
- Promote participation
Why do we need a human rights-based approach?

From...

A medical approach which usually entails binary categorical approaches to diagnosis and individual-level processes.

This approach only palliates the damages of unjust social conditions.

...To

A biopsychosocial approach which keeps in mind the protection of human rights.

This approach understands psychological wellbeing depends on political, social and economic circumstances.

*There can be no good mental health without human rights*
A human rights-based approach to mental health

Disturbances of thought, emotion, behavior, and relationships with others that lead to suffering and functional impairment in one or more major life activities.

A state of well-being in which the individual can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and is able to contribute to the community.

Civil, Political, Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Roma Mental Distress

Experience of social disadvantage

Structural Discrimination

Exclusion from social spheres

Transformative power and capacity to respond

Roma Mental Wellbeing

Feeling of being recognized and important

Build networks and capacity to respond

Transformative multilevel change

Critical awareness and strategies
How can we begin to build a shared understanding?

(1) To propose a framework to explore non-medical approaches to mental health for Roma communities in Europe;
(2) To provide an analysis to guide future initiatives based on the findings of three consortia.

- **Ukraine**: Social determinants of Mental Health of Roma in Ukraine
- **Italy**: The Influence of Discrimination on the Mental Health of Roma People
- **Germany & Czech Republic**: The Abyss of Violence: Dealing with trauma over generations in Sinti and Roma communities in Germany and Czech Republic
- **Spain**: What do we know about Romani Mental Health? A scoping review
Romani mental distress: A definition

**Structural discrimination**

Antigypsyism is a historically constructed racism against Romani people. It includes homogenizing, attribution of specific traits and violent practices that reproduce violate structures.

**Exclusion from social spheres**

Rejection and lack of participation from political, economical and social fields (such as the access to basic rights and freedoms like employment, health, education or housing or participation in politics).

**Transmitted trauma and interiorized discrimination**

Social trauma, such as systemic racism, violent conflict and displacement, can damage communities for generations.
Romani Mental Wellbeing: A definition

**Critical awareness and strengths**
This is understood as a first step in the journey toward becoming a politically active member of society and a way to re-narrate our life stories to understand the unjust sources and our role in changing it.

**Build networks and capacity to respond**
Identifying support and allies in the community—organizations, local public officials, informal groups, community leaders, religious groups. This involves community organizing strategies, for example, building relationships and local coalitions.

**Transformative multilevel changes**
Taking action in different settings from the interpersonal level, organizational level, community level and institutional level.
Where do we go from here?

How can we develop research approaches that are free of violence?

How can Romani adopt a community development and organizing approach?

How can we address discrimination at multiple levels?

How can we expand our conceptualization of trauma towards a strength-based approach?

Roma Mental Health
The human rights-based model in practice

How can we build and transfer contextualized critical knowledge about Roma mental health in North Macedonia?

- Raising awareness on mental health and identify, analyze and prioritize local issues
- Build networks and capacity to respond
- Designing plans to take action at the local levels
Thank you!

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