



## Mid-Term Evaluation Report

### Regional Project:

**“For Active Inclusion and Rights of Roma Women in the Western Balkans - FAIR III”**

Grant Number 8285-00/2019

Project duration: 36 months (1 February 2019 – 31 January 2022)

Funded by the Austrian Development Cooperation and  
the Czech Republic Development Cooperation (1 February – 31 December 2019)

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## List of Abbreviations

ADC	Austrian Development Cooperation
ADA	Austrian Development Agency
BiH	Republic of Bosnia and Herzegovina
CARE	CARE International Balkans/CARE Österreich/CARE Czech Republic
COE	Council of Europe
CSC	Community Score Card
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
EU	European Union
ER	Expected Result
FAIR III	Short project name - For Active Inclusion and Rights of Roma Women in the Western Balkans Phase III
GE	Gender Equality
GBV	Gender-based Violence
LAP	Local Action Plan
MNE	Republic of Montenegro
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
NAP	National Action Plan
Serbia	Republic of Serbia
SRHM	Sexual, Reproductive and Maternal Health
TOR	Terms of Reference

## 1. Executive Summary

The **purpose** and scope of the mid-term evaluation was to establish where progress has been made during the first half of the FAIR III project (18 months) and where the main gaps are. The findings will, first and foremost, inform the CARE project team and partners on what aspects need particular attention and how to best approach them in order to meet the expected objectives and have the intended impact.

**Evaluation background:** The project “For Active Inclusion and Rights of Roma Women in the Western Balkans” (FAIR III)/ Grant Number 8285-00/2019 is being implemented over a period of 36 months, from February 1, 2019 to January 31, 2022. It is funded by the Austrian Development Cooperation and the Czech Development Cooperation and implemented in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), Serbia and Montenegro by CARE and the six key local Roma women (lead or focused) NGOs as project partners: ‘Better Future’ from Tuzla and Otaharin from Bijeljina, BiH; ‘Romani Cikna’ from Krusevac, ‘Osvit’ from Nis and Roma Women Center Veliki Crljeni, Lazarevac from Serbia and ‘Center for Roma Initiatives’ from Niksic, Montenegro.

The overarching goal of the project is to empower Roma women and girls to be free and able to exercise their rights to live a healthy, dignified life free from violence, inequality and discrimination with support from their partners, families and communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro.

**Evaluation process and methodology:** The evaluation was conducted internally, by CARE Gender Program Coordinator in three phases: a planning and tool development phase that took place in September and October 2020, the actual data collection happened in the period of November and December 2020 and the third phase – data validation and report writing was done during January and February 2021. Due to the COVID-19 restrictions all the planning consultations and actual interviews/discussions were done remotely. The process applied the following qualitative and quantitative methods and instruments: document review, anonymous online survey for partners and external stakeholders and key performance interviews with partner/sub-grantees teams and CARE Project Manager and Coordinator.

### Key findings

Relevance, Design & Coherence: The project has been assessed as highly relevant and aligned with the national and international priorities as countries in the EU accession process, confirming that the timing as well as the thematic scope has been well identified by CARE and the partners. On that track, the project logic has been described as comprehensive, well designed, based on lessons learned from the previous phase, developed in a transparent and participatory process with a holistic and a well-balanced approach toward addressing burning issues. The six sub-grantees with their associates implementing eight community level projects are jointly fully contributing to the overall goal., which, although not achievable by this project only, the mutually reinforcing outputs leading to the specific objective accomplishment are jointly paving the way toward that long term impact.

Effectiveness & Efficiency: The evaluation findings about the level of contribution to the envisaged results are assessed overall as positive for the first 18 months of the implementation. Approximately, 2/3 of the intended activities have been conducted and the number of directly reached beneficiaries well on track or even more than planned which is a big success taking into consideration the Covid-19 pandemic and the imposed restrictions that have affected the last third of the assessed period in a way not ever experience before (globally, life threatening, highly infectious) that caused a lock down and serious interruptions of all aspects of free movement and work. However, the evidence shows that the empowering has happened at the individual, organizational levels as well as been reflected clearly in improved relationships among national and regional key partners, Roma partners and local

and national government institutions as well between the Roma community and the government representatives (increased understanding, acceptance and mutual trust).

**Impact & Sustainability:** In spite of the negative effects of the pandemic, the level of impact and high sustainability potential has been recognized in the first three outputs, youth life skills education and community grants and the national and regional Roma women network. The fourth output is yet to be fully addressed and will depend on the circumstances and the opportunities for travelling and gathering of bigger groups of people. On the building agency domains of change – the empowerment of individual Roma women has happened, from the Roma CSO/NGO staff employed over a longer period of time (salary portion vs. fees) and building their technical and soft skills reporting feeling more self-confident and stronger with increased facilitation and relationship building skills. Organizationally, a large majority of partners/sub-grantees report on increased organizational capacities sustainability, improved management practices, strengthened teams, increased recognition and visibility, also reflected in the fact that more Roma women are involved in local and national working groups on strategies/action plans development, monitoring. Relations are also being established and improved through mutual exchange and learning not only among project partners regionally, but also among government counterparts from the three countries. Transforming structures by changing norms and attitudes as well as increased influence on the laws and practices is happening as a result of FAIRIII (CEDAW shadow report and LAPs developments, prevention of forced ad child marriage practices, improved level of sexual and reproductive health practices) where Roma women get recognized as important actors in their families, communities and by the government, their voice is being heard and their rights and participation considered.

#### **Summary Recommendations:**

1. Due to the insecurities related to the Covid-19 CARE and partners reassess the level and type of risks and develop a new implementation plan.
2. To keep in mind health risks not only for the participants but also all the key actors implementing the project.
3. Partners should develop sustainability plans to address needs, challenges and opportunities for the year 2022 and further by building on the identified impact multipliers (the activities identified as having the highest potential for scaling up).
4. YMI - LSE Coordinators should connect with the YMI mentors and other YMI partners and utilize the educational and awareness raising resources and actively engage in the Future4Youth regional movement building activities.
5. Continue with testing of the CSC application in new communities or the same communities but on different priorities by focusing on 'quick gains' – services that can be resolved and made sustainable over a shorter period of time.
6. Focus more on collecting and presenting the qualitative data and accomplishments, in a creative and innovative ways– an additional workshop for raising motivation and skills could be organized.
7. Continue strengthening the fundraising activities with partners, either provide assistance for identifying new/potential donors or proposal development for individual Roma organizations, national networks or for cross-border/regional network initiatives.
8. If the circumstances allow, put more focus on meeting the indicators related to the last output and find ways (virtual spaces) to connect and take part with relevant global movements.

## 2. Introduction

The **purpose** of the mid-term evaluation is to establish where progress has been made during the first half of the FAIRIII project and where the main gaps are. The findings will, first and foremost, inform the CARE project team and partners on what aspects need particular attention and how to best approach them in order to meet the expected objectives and have the intended impact. As laid out in ADA Guidelines for Program and Project Evaluations 2020, the purpose is to different degrees reflected in all three functions: a) Learning function, since it seeks to understand what aspects of the intervention have worked during the first half of the project and why; b) Steering function as it presents credible and reliable findings for evidence-based decision-making (necessary adjustments) at primarily operational level and finally the c) Accountability and Communication function as it confirms the relevance of the funds used and results achieved. The full report in English will be shared with the donor and the summarized version containing the key findings, conclusions and recommendations in the local language will be shared with the project partners and other relevant stakeholders.

Thus, the mid-term evaluation's **objective** is to contribute to a comprehensive understanding of the project progress and based on the findings and recommendations inform future actions. As planned and explained in the Project Proposal, the evaluation was conducted as an internal (self-)assessment, by CARE Balkans Regional Gender Program Coordinator and the FAIR III team in close collaboration with the key partner representatives and covers the **first 18 months** of project implementation (February 1, 2019 inclusive of August 2020).

In terms of the **scope**, the evaluation builds on the Baseline, progress and activity reports produced so far as well as a series of discussions with the partners/sub-grantees. It includes analysis of the inputs collected from all five subgrantees - Roma organizations – implementers of Output 1 (youth and YMI approach related) and Output 2 (community grants on improved access to and quality of services) subgrants, the national Roma network Coordinators (one per country) as well as a certain number of key stakeholders per grant/country/partner.

The analysis conducted and results achieved have been assessed against the six OECD-DAC evaluation criteria: **relevance** (is the intervention doing the right thing), **coherence** (how well does the intervention fit), **effectiveness** (is the intervention achieving the objectives) and **efficiency** (how well are the resources used) of the action. In addition, the criteria of the **impact** (what aspect are making the biggest differences) and **sustainability** (what intervention aspects have the biggest potential to last) will be addressed from the 'road towards' perspective due to the nature of the very process (mid-term, not final). The report will be submitted as part of the planned first progress report in 2021.

## 3. Background and Context Analysis

Context: An official continuation of the Roma Decade 2005-2015 in a form of a Poznan Declaration<sup>1</sup> has taken off after the project start, whereby the leaders of the three target countries reinforced their commitment to dedicate resources and focus on improved living conditions and socio-economic integration of Roma people in the Western Balkans. The leaders pledged to take all necessary steps to However, these concrete steps need yet to yield concrete results in the areas of employment, housing, education, health and the fight against discrimination of Roma.

A very segmented and 'no – to – slow' progress has also been confirmed by the in the European Commission's in their Country Reports 2020 on fundamental (Roma and Egyptian

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<sup>1</sup> Declaration of Partners from the Western Balkans on the Integration of the Roma within the EU Enlargement Process – the Declaration of Poznan

minority) rights for [Bosnia and Herzegovina](#), Republic of [Serbia](#) and [Montenegro](#) as part of the assessment of their journey towards their EU membership. While the legislative and institutional frameworks are largely in place, consistent and effective implementation still needs to be ensured. In spite of significant efforts of the Roma and non-Roma human rights and gender equality focused local/national and international NGOs what still remain as key barriers that hinder social and economic inclusion in all three countries are: high unemployment rate an discrimination in employment, low participation in public life, prejudice and anti-gypsism. In addition, low level of education remains an issue for employment, domestic violence often goes underreported and many young girls from Roma settlements marry at an early age.

Due to the preparation for and the execution of the elections in Serbia and Montenegro in June and August of 2020 respectively, the dynamic of project implementation was somewhat affected by delays. This is in particular true for the activities related to close collaboration with the local and national government representatives, Roma leaders as well as to budget allocations/approvals for Roma related strategies/action plans. The local elections in BiH are planned to take place in November 2020.

What was totally unexpected and has heavily impacted the entire world and the region since early spring of 2020 is the COVID-19 pandemic that marked the last six months of the assessed project implementation period (March through August 2020). A series of different level and range of restrictions introduced by the governments have impacted us all, personally and professionally. As far as FAIR III is concerned, it has on the one hand impacted the poor communities the most as authorities hadn't introduced timely and appropriate measures to protect the most vulnerable (minority communities included) and on the other had forced the project team and partners to be flexible and postpone or adjust the project activities planned for that period. CARE team had, in close collaboration with the partners, assessed the situation carefully by prioritizing health and safety of all the involved, and came up with a new plan containing: a) transfer to the online communication and project coordination; b) postponing the implementation of activities that could not be easily adapted to happen virtually - mainly related to Output 1 (face to face workshops in schools that closed down) and 4 (regional meetings and workshops due to travel restrictions) and c) enabling partners assist the communities in need by providing direct support, information sharing and delivery of humanitarian assistance (mainly hygiene packages delivery and provision of educational sessions on responsible behavior/protective measures) to the Roma and Egyptian communities in the three target countries.

**Background:** The project logic is comprehensive and addresses all three key components of CARE's Gender Equality Framework and is based on the following **Theory of Change (ToC)**: If the project helps Roma women and girls build agency - their confidence, self-esteem, skills and capabilities + enables their empowerment to influence change in power relations, at home and in their communities and + provides space and support for transforming structures by changing norms, customs, laws and policies = Roma women and girls in the three project countries will realize their human rights and live a dignified life together with their partners, families and communities.

At the **Outcome** level, the project seeks to empower Roma women and girls to be free and able to exercise their rights to live a healthy, dignified life free from violence, inequality and discrimination with support from their partners, families and communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro.

The intervention is being implemented by CARE (the core members being full-time Project Manager and Coordinator) and partners across three countries, in fifteen towns and thirty-eight communities. Out of four mutually reinforcing outputs, the first two are being delivered directly by six sub-grantees, Roma lead or focused local/national civil society organizations. The eight sub-grants were awarded during the project's inception phase as a result of an internal (national Roma and Egyptian networks) competitive selection process. Only two partner organizations were awarded with two/both sub-grants, Otaharin in BiH and Centre for Roma

Initiatives (CRI) in Montenegro since they had managed to demonstrate the required level of organizational and programmatic capacities. CARE's role is to provide the sub-grantees with technical support, continuous guidance and mentoring (capacity strengthening on individual and organizational levels) as well as to help them more effectively network with other peer organizations and allies nationally and regionally/cross-border.

**Output 1** refers to the enhanced capacities of Roma CSOs, youth, and key community actors to practice and promote gender equitable, healthy and non-violent lifestyle with help of tested models and approaches. The three awarded sub-grants, one per country, are being implemented by the following partner organizations:

1. Citizen's Association for Promotion of Education of Roma *Otaharin* (Bijeljina, BiH)
2. *Center for Roma Initiatives* (CRI) (Nikšić, Montenegro),
3. Roma Women Association *Osvit* (Niš, Republic of Serbia)

These organizations work with youth (Roma and non-Roma youth in schools and local communities) and representatives of educational institutions.

Five sub-grantees (two from Serbia and BiH and one from Montenegro) have been leading the work under the second expected result (**Output 2**) on improved access to and provision of services for Roma, Egyptian (RE) women and girls (in particular on SRMH, GBV and Education) by strengthening their own capacities and the existing participatory accountability community mechanisms and they are:

1. Organization for Promotion of Education of Roma *Otaharin* (Bijeljina, BiH) in cooperation with an associate from the Romani Cej organization Prnjavor
2. Association of Roma Women *Better Future* (Tuzla, BiH) in cooperation with an associate from the Romani Cej organization Prnjavor;
3. *Center for Roma Initiatives* (CRI), from Nikšić, Montenegro
4. Women Roma Center *Veliki Crljeni* (Lazarevac, Serbia)
5. *Romani Cikna* (Kruševac, Serbia).

**Output 3** aims at enabling three national-level Roma women networks: Montenegrin network FIRST, BiH network Success and Roma Women Network of Republic of Serbia to be active and contribute to the effective functioning of the regional Roma Women Balkans Network and its enhanced efforts towards Post 2020 EU Roma Integration Agenda. Three Roma women as Coordinators/Facilitators were appointed by each network to enhance the networks' impact, monitor and record their activities and also help with monitoring of how respective governments implement the international treaties/conventions related to Roma(women) rights. The network coordinators/facilitators' engagement is being managed by one of the selected partner organization per country (Better Future in BiH, Romani Cikna in Republic of Serbia and CRI in Montenegro) that are in charge for their employment contracts and related administrative obligations. In addition, the establishment of a Roma Women Balkans Network took place in the first period of the project implementation and an agreement was reached that CARE would coordinate the work of this cross-border network until the end of the project.

And finally, through the last expected result (**Output 4**), Roma women and girls, CSOs and Networks were meant to become actively engaged in regional and global social movement initiatives promoting and advocating for gender equality and (minority) women's rights. The latter two outputs were planned to be directly managed by the CARE team. The last one was planned to be gaining more attention in the last part of the implementation cycle.

The project was planned to target 26,150 people in total – aiming at 85% Roma and over 60% women and girls. Over 20,000 people were expected to be reached in the three target countries directly and about 78,000 as indirect beneficiaries.



## 4. Evaluation Design and Approach

### 4.1. Methodological Approach

This mid-term evaluation used a **non-experimental design** since it considers the extent to which change has occurred only for those affected by FAIRIII and a **'mixed methods'** in terms of **methodological approach** which ensures that, although being conducted internally, relevant and good quality data is collected and analyzed resulting in an objective and sound assessment of progress. Therefore, the process was built as a participatory effort including the key actors, most relevant representatives of CARE FAIRIII team, partners and the external stakeholders directly engaged in at least one segment of the initiative.

When it comes to the assessment of the project relevance reflected in the design, monitoring and implementation against ADA's fundamental principles, FAIRIII in its essence is about contributing to increased gender equality (ADA's and CARE's gender equality framework) and inclusiveness as well as anti-discriminatory behavior. It is being implemented with a gender lens on and genuine participation of the target population via local Roma (women) led civil society organizations as well as of the relevant government representatives and has been so far successful in seeking to:

1. Strengthen capacities of Roma women and girls, the marginalized youth and the Roma CSOs to play a role of agents of change (build agency) in their communities;
2. Help them own and exercise more effectively their role of enabler and mediator between Roma communities and the authorities in creating better relationships based on mutual understanding and support to jointly address the priorities identified and;
3. Transform structures by introducing and modeling new, different approaches and methods in improving access and quality of service provision to the Roma mainly in the areas of (sexual and reproductive) health, education, and social welfare.

All the indicators were adequately defined (and are being monitored in the same fashion) to reflect the main target population disaggregated by ethnicity (as much as possible, depending on how the Roma/Egyptian participants decide to identify as a minority), age and type of participant (local CSOs, local and/or national government, school staff, media representatives, community workers, etc.). Through regular email/Skype/phone communication, monitoring visits and reporting, CARE ensures further transparency and accountability towards the population it serves as well as the subgrantees/local CSOs as implementing partners.

During the reporting period, CARE International updated Safeguarding Policy on Protection from Sexual Harassment, Exploitation and Abuse, and Child Abuse (PSHEA-CA) that came into force on April 15, 2020 clearly describing our zero tolerance towards any type of sexual misconduct and survivor-centered approach, the commitments and standards of expected behavior relevant for all CARE employees and the related personnel, including partners/subgrantees staff and volunteers. CARE Germany managing CARE Balkans as its Lead Member has also put in place a Protocol describing available channels for reporting feedback, suspicions, and complaints as well as how the complaints are being handled. All CARE staff members have in the meantime signed the Policy/Code of Conduct and it has become an integral part of the Subgrant Agreements/Contracts. In addition to the initial awareness raising session on the Policy and the available protection mechanism, FAIRII partners' capacity strengthening to recognize and adequately respond to SHEA-CA cases as well as develop community level, accessible and safe channels if those developed by CARE do not meet the requirements, is planned to be worked on with help of CARE's PSHEA Focal Point until the end of the project.

### 4.2. Data Collection and Analysis Tools

The methodology was designed with the purpose to allow for triangulation of the findings maximising thereby the quality of the recommendations with an aim to, on the one hand, provide useful information for CARE and the partners for the remainder of the project and, on

the other, to help partner organizations' develop their project exit strategies/sustainability plans for the phase following the end of the project.

CARE's Regional Gender Equality Program Coordinator was guiding the process and is responsible for the data collection tool development/baseline tools adjustments, analysis, and report development. The surveys, data collection spreadsheet on the indicators and the interviews were done in one version of the local language that all understand and communicate in for better understanding and a smoother process. As mentioned in the introduction, the summary of the report will be translated from English into the local language and presented/shared with the Roma partner organizations with clear recommendations aimed at improvements and the sustainability prospects presented to the partners.

It is important to note that there are two assessments on changes and attitudes not planned to be conducted at the mid-term, only at the baseline and as part of the external final project evaluation. One refers to the first output and the changes with young people as a result of a series of life skills education sessions held in schools and communities lead by three Roma organization partners (sub-grantees). The second relates to the second output and is type of random community survey conducted by five Roma organization partners (sub-grantees) on the satisfaction with or/and access to the services available.

The evaluation was conducted in three phases: a planning and tool development phase that took place in September and October 2020, actual data collection happened in the period of November and December 2020 and the third phase – data validation and report writing was done during January and February 2021. Due to the COVID-19 restrictions all the planning consultations and actual interviews/discussions were done remotely. The process applied both, qualitative and quantitative methods and instruments as follows:

- **Document Review/desk top research:** FAIR III 1<sup>st</sup> Progress Report covering the first year of project implementation (February 2019 – January 2020) and the following Activity Report for the six-month period (Feb-July 2020); Partner narrative reports on sub-grant implementation for the first 18 months. The progress update for the intervention's evaluation period was reported by partners/sub-grantees for each Output level indicator from the project's Log-frame via a tool/excel spreadsheet used for the Baseline data collection. The tool itself was upgraded to reflect partners' feedback and suggestions received during the discussions following the baseline report. And finally, the EU Country/Progress Reports for 2020 were reviewed to better understand if any major changes had happened in the topic related political and socio-economic context in the target countries (excerpts on the Roma related issues from the reports are briefly described under the Context of the report and in more detail presented in Annex 4).
- **Anonymous online survey for all the staff members and volunteers** of the Roma (lead or focused) CSOs directly working on the project: the survey had been distributed to 60 persons, with the response rate of 78.3% (47 people responded).
- **Anonymous online survey for key stakeholders** (representatives of schools, centres for social work, police, municipality officials in charge for Roma issues and the media collaborating of the project): the survey was sent to 31 people recommended by the partners (23 female and 8 male; 12 in Serbia, 10 in BiH and 9 in Montenegro). A total of 17 responses were received or 54.8%.

Both surveys (Annex 1) combined open- and close – ended questions addressing the aspects of relevance of the project, the level of success in reaching the project objectives, key activities/goals with the highest sustainability potential as well as the limitations that hinder or present an issue for meeting the expected results. Reflections on the implications of Covid-19 pandemic were also included. For the partners, the survey also contained a question on the quality of project management from CARE's side.

- **Key performance interviews – online** via Skype and Zoom with 15 (13 female and 2 male) representatives of six partners managing and coordinating sub-grants and national networks and two key CARE FAIRIII team members – Project Manager and Coordinator. The people had been selected since they are directly engaged and play an active role in the project. A set of guiding/open-ended questions were developed to help facilitate the process that lasted between 60 and 90 minutes per interview with a small group of two to three persons taking part (please see a set of guiding questions in Annex 3).

#### 4.3. Risks, Limitations and Mitigation Measures

As already briefly noted, the biggest obstacle to implement the project as initially envisaged was caused by the Covid-19 pandemic that caused the introduction of movement restrictions by all the governments in most of the world, the Balkan countries included. The strict measures affected the last six months of the evaluation period limiting most of the regional and national level gatherings and exchanges among bigger groups of people.

As far as the mid-term evaluation process is concerned, due to the so called second wave of the pandemic that started in the early Fall of 2020 and is still ongoing, no face to face process introduction and data collection was organized but were held online, via either small group Skype/Zoom sessions or virtual project workshops and meetings. To avoid any risk of exclusion or discrimination, CARE made sure prior to the evaluation, that all partner representatives had access to and were available to take part virtually. Investing into Roma CSOs/partner organizations capacity over a longer period of time has once again proved to be justified for a longer-term benefit. Although, online communication between CARE and partners (emails, catch up meetings, thematic discussions and consultations) had been ongoing before the pandemic, it becoming basically the only option during certain periods in 2020 required solid and maintained IT equipment and a satisfactory level of technical skills on the side of partners' staff.

## 5. Findings

In this chapter the key mid-term evaluation findings are presented whereby the relevance to evaluation criteria and questions from the Evaluation Matrix (Annex 3) is ensured. The six category rating from ADA's Evaluation 2020 Guidelines/ADC Result Assessment form have been used and they are as follows: **F**=fully achieved; **L**= largely achieved; **P**=partially achieved; **N**= not achieved; **NAP**=not applicable and **NAS**=not assessed.

### Evaluation criterion: 5.1 Relevance – Is the intervention doing the right things?

**Question 5.1.1: To what extent have the objectives of the intervention responded to the needs of the local communities and the strategic development policy of the target countries?**

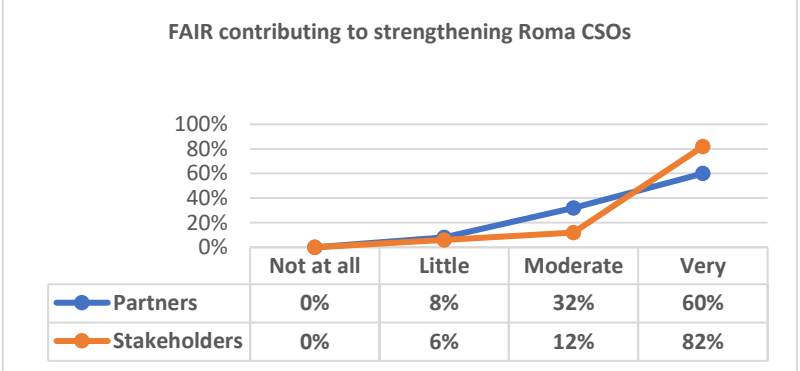
**Finding 1 (F):** The project has been **fully relevant** in terms of addressing the needs of the local Roma communities and is in line with the national strategic priorities of the target countries.

FAIRIII was developed based on the evaluation findings of the previous project phase reflecting opinions and recommendations from all relevant stakeholders and external experts on key issues and needs Roma women, girls and youth. Hence, as described in the project proposal as well as the context analysis above, the project is aligned with the EU and national level policies and thereby not only responds, but also contributes to an increased attention and progress in the following Sustainable Development Goals that speak to health and well-being for all (SDG3), gender equality (SDG5), reducing inequalities (SDG10). Further, the intervention is fully aligned with the ADC's principles of gender equality and empowerment of marginalized women and girls by engaging men and boys as allies in the promotion of democracy and human rights. By investing in the personal and professional development of Roma women and girls and creating an enabling environment for their social integration and

their improved living conditions, the project is contributing to sustainable poverty reduction in the long run. In addition, with the good governance and human rights focus and the rights-based approach the project clearly contributes one of ADCs long-term goals related to the EU accession process for all the three target countries.

A majority of surveyed partners (74.7%) and stakeholders (70.6%) agree that the FAIRIII is doing the right things by addressing the key needs and priorities of the local Roma communities in target locations in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro. This is in particular true for the lack of social integration and participation in the public life, equal access to and the quality of the services provided (health, education) as well as decision making power and inclusion in implementation of the Roma related strategies and plans. Those who have assessed this indicator as being partially met refer to the segments like housing and employment that are also highly problematic issues in all three target countries, but not a direct focus of this intervention. However, many interviewees recognize that the Roma (lead) civil society organizations and Roma women and men engaged had significantly benefited also financially from the support. The fact that there are no other projects that in this empowering way enable local Roma women organizations to connect and network both at the national but also regional levels has been mentioned by many evaluation participants as unique and valuable. All the activities implemented so far have been assessed as highly relevant, from the: life skills workshops delivered at schools, learning about and beginning of the community score card implementation when it comes to increasing access to and the quality of service provision by power holders from the side of right holders (Roma as service users) to regional Roma network establishment.

Both partners and stakeholders similarly perceive the high level of relevance and success of the intervention in strengthening Roma civil society organizations (please see the table the below). That has been reiterated during the interviews by recognizing CARE’s unique highly transparent and participatory approach in empowering Roma women (lead) organizations, partly through helping them raise their profile and gain professional skills as well as by ensuring a portion of operational costs and salaries of the staff engaged in the sub-grants. That has enabled partners to do their job better and to not constantly function in a survivor mode. Thus, partners claim that this type of support has made them



acknowledged as a relevant actor not only by the Roma community (male leaders in particular) and the non-Roma civil society, but also with the government institutions where they are now better positioned to get a seat at the table and influence longer-term, structural changes. In addition, the projects is seen as being innovative since it introduces and pilots new tools and methods piloted (like Community Score Card – CSC or Social Analysis and Action – SAA) that other CSOs, Roma and non-Roma can learn from.

**Question 5.1.2: Has the intervention logic been comprehensive?**

**Finding 2 (F): The intervention logic is clear and well-articulated; the indicators are clear and SMART (fully comprehensive)**

As briefly explained in the Background section above, the project has been planned and designed with a clear theory of change in mind, based on the lessons learned from the previous phases, including the type of partners, participants and the overall socio-economic context. The logic applied so far seems to be comprehensive and directly and clearly contributing to the project goal. Each of the four expected results/outputs directly or indirectly builds agency

of Roma women, girls, men and boys to be skilful and confident in exercising their rights, building healthy and effective relationships within a school, a household, a CSO or in a community, but also lobby and advocate at different levels for transformed structures and attitudes of the power holders and frameworks in place to better respond to the needs of ethnic and gender minorities. The outputs are intertwined and mutually reinforcing since teams within partner organizations and then partners on a national and regional levels exchange their skills, learn from each other and provide support and encouragement toward an improved position and role of Roma women and girls in the target societies. While CARE is in charge of managing and coordinating the entire intervention, the first two outputs are directly implemented by partner organizations via sub-grant agreement with CARE. Further, CARE coordinates and

The Roma community is encouraged to take the responsibility and is learning how to independently resolve the burning issues.

*Anonymous, On-line Survey for partner organizations*

monitors the implementation via email, skype and phone communication as well as visits and face to face/online regional meetings and thematic workshops enable, on the one hand, a provision of adequate, tailor-made technical assistance, to each partner and Roma women network addressing specific needs and issue. This, on the other hand, enables the project team to make necessary adjustments to the activities planned. CARE's and ADA's flexibility in the Covid-19 pandemic has been recognized by all the actors and highly appreciated. In spite of the fact that the entire world was taken by surprise and there was no known or tried scenario on how to adequately respond,

FAIRIII team managed to come up with a set of mitigation measures that rightly prioritized life and health of all the participants, partners and CARE staff. The implementation plan was adjusted in a realistic and skillful manner in close collaboration with the project partners. Due to the dire circumstances in which a big majority of Roma live, CARE ensured that they are the first to receive humanitarian/emergency assistance including the delivery of hygiene kits and awareness raising sessions about risks and mandatory preventive measures.

## **Evaluation criterion: 5.2. Coherence – How well does the intervention fit?**

**Question 5.2.1: To what extent do the individual sub-grant partners form a coherent response contributing to the overall ToC - Theory of Change and the project overall goal?**

**Finding 3 (F): The six sub-grantees with their associates implementing eight community level projects are jointly fully contributing to the overall ToC (fully met)**

The intervention implements activities in three countries, fifteen cities and thirty-eight communities, via eight sub-grants and the first two outputs focusing on the following:

- 1) Promoting gender equality and healthy lifestyles among youth implemented by one partner per the target country, three all together: BiH: Citizen's Association for Promotion of Education of Roma 'Otaharin' from Bijeljina; Montenegro: Center for Roma Initiatives (CRI) from Niksic and Serbia: Roma Women Association 'Osvit' from Nis all targeting Roma and non-Roma youth in schools and local communities and representatives of educational institutions, and
- 2) Improving Roma communities' access to social services implemented by five partners in the three target countries: in BiH: Organization for Promotion of Education of Roma 'Otaharin' from Bijeljina in cooperation with a female Roma leader from Prnjavor and Association of Roma Women 'Better Future from Tuzla in cooperation with a male Roma leader from Prnjavor; Montenegro: Center for Roma Initiatives (CRI) from Nikšić and Serbia: Women Roma Center Veliki Crljeni (Lazarevac) and Romani Cikna (Kruševac).

CARE's team had developed a template which the applicants were expected to use, along the instructions helping them with the entire process. The templates in the local language contained a set of guiding questions, the key output related indicators and targets. The intention was to help the interested parties design their community level projects in a way that

speaks to the overall project methodology, thematic areas, and expectations. The process was competitive and the applicants were encouraged to identify best approaches based on their specific skills and strengths but also to look for potentials for collaboration when it comes to tackling the needs of their communities with the projects' overall theory of change in mind. As a result, both sets of sub-grants are directed at empowering Roma women and girls to realize their human rights and live a dignified life together with their partners, families and communities by:

- a) helping Roma women and girls, men and boys learn about their rights and how to improve their health, sexual and reproductive health included, how to change their perception and behavior when it comes to gender equality, peer and sexual violence gender related attitudes by challenging the prevailing norms (increased agency);
- b) supporting them to apply and practice these new skills and behaviors by actively engaging in looking for ways on how to exercise the rights to services, from education, regular health check-ups and social welfare within their families, communities and the representatives of the local service providers (relationship building) and
- c) building on the increased agency and better relationships to transform how services have been delivered by the government and utilized by the Roma and future public policies developed and implemented.

### **Evaluation criterion: 5.3. Effectiveness - Is the intervention achieving its objectives?**

**Question 5.3. 1: To what extent have the objectives of the intervention been achieved/ How likely is it that the objectives of the intervention will be achieved until the end of the project?**

**Finding 4 (L):** Based on the overall assessment for the first 18 months of project implementation by CARE and partners, it is fair to say that the objectives have been **largely achieved** to the level planned, in spite of the Covid-19 pandemic and it can also be assumed that the project outcome will be fully achieved until the project end.

Out of the surveyed partners' staff members and volunteers, 66% think that the project has so far been optimally successful (34% very successful)-both scores being explained with the Covid-19 crisis as the cause (the 'optimal' group thinks it would have been more successful if it weren't for the pandemic, while the other group sees it as being very successful since it continued during despite the situation.

In the following chapter, the output level data will be presented by providing a comparison from the Logframe, the Baseline and now the Mid-term data collected from partners for an easier insight into the progress made as well as gaps and obstacles encountered.

<b>Output 1:</b> Enhanced capacities of Roma CSOs, youth and key community actors to practice and promote gender equitable, healthy and non-violent lifestyle with help of tested models and approaches.
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There has been no change in terms of the number of sub-grantees/partners implementing, and the location: three key partners, Otaharin (BiH), Osvit (Serbia) and CRI (Montenegro), implement the adapted Program Y (youth) – on life skills education (LSE) selected modules, developed during CARE's Young Men Initiative project, together with their associates, in eleven locations. The following twelve topics were jointly identified by the FAIRIII partners as most suitable ones for the project's target audience: *What is it that we call gender?, What would I want to do with my life?, What is violence?, A living fool or a dead hero, Labeling, Fun scenes, Aggressive, passive or assertive, What are drugs?, Talk about alcohol and alcoholism, I risk when..., Health, STIs, HIV and AIDS, Men as caregivers.*

As planned, a baseline research on attitudes and behaviors was conducted during the second half of the first project year. The aim was to evaluate how much the representatives of two key target group (600 young people + 60 adults) who were to be directly involved in educational workshops within the LSE program know and how they think about gender equality, violence,

health and healthy lifestyles (the full Report annexed to the first Progress Report). The research conducted in five locations of the three target countries was done on a sample of 843 persons: 805 respondents from the youth group (participants of educational LSE programs) and 38 representatives of local communities whose roles are significant for addressing the issue of Roma integration in the local community. The research showed that:

- a) young people have below-average knowledge about the LSE topics, in particular gender stereotypes, stigmatization, forms of psychological, domestic and gender-based violence;
- b) they lack the basic skills when it comes to dealing with stress, leadership skills, resistance to negative influences, protection against violence in the digital environment, establishing social relationships and critical thinking;
- c) high likelihood that young people will be exposed to some form of risky behavior: engage in a fight to defend a friend, publish some of the personal information -gender, age, place of residence- on the social networks, accept a request for friendship from an unknown person on social networks (Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat), they will visit websites that have erotic and/or porn content, a known or unknown person will touch them in a way that is not appropriate and is undesirable, will consume cigarettes and alcohol).

When it comes to the representatives of the local communities (adults), they have above-average knowledge of gender norms, gender equality, peer and gender violence, and healthy lifestyles while they scored lower than average in forms of psychological violence, gender stereotypes, stigmatization, assertive behavior (engaging in non-aggressive needs) and sexually transmitted diseases. The majority of respondents expect that project activities will lead to positive changes in local communities and among youth and that it will contribute to the reduction of peer violence, better and healthier life of children and young people, and better relations between peers and within the local community. As already mentioned, early 2020 has unfortunately brought the pandemic that had caused interruptions in the implementation of the workshops due to the schools being closed most of the time during the March-June period in all three countries. However, CARE and partners are hopeful that there will still be time to conduct the remaining modules before the project is over and have the end-line assessment show positive changes in the knowledge, attitudes and behaviors in youth and the key local community representatives.

We've managed to conduct most of the planned life skills education workshops in spite of the Covid related restrictions. Some were organized in the school yard and some in schools with the distance-keeping measures applied.

*Anonymous, On-line Survey for partners*

The number of schools and communities where the sub-grants are being implemented has increased from the baseline phase from 12 to 14 schools (ten high and four primary) plus the workshops were also delivered to the young Roma and non-Roma in six communities. In spite of schools being closed for almost three months in during the first half of 2020, the partners have managed to train more than planned (72 vs. 70 planned) young women and men who are now trainers/workshop facilitators for the LSE selected modules delivery (62.5% Roma). A total of 756 young people and 32 adults have successfully finished the workshops in schools and communities during the first half of the project while 61% of the planned school and community campaigns were organized and have already reached more people, mostly youth, than initially planned (2600 planned vs. 2393 reached).

The overview below presents in bold the key changes from the initial assessment of the indicators set: **Logframe – Baseline – Mid-term:**

- Instead of the initially planned 24 (80% of 30) Roma CSOs staff to be trained as peer-educators/facilitators who successfully implement CARE's Life Skills Education (LSE) Model – Program Y in communities and schools, three partners intended at the baseline to increase that number and train 70 staff members for that purpose – **at mid-term: 72 trained and 34 work as facilitators.**

- Out of the planned 70% of 600 targeted Roma and non-Roma youth (or 420) and 60 (or 42) community members (disaggregated by age, sex) who would successfully finish at least one LSE Program, the sub-grantees intend to engage 1.160 young women and men and 64 adults (school staff and Roma leaders) – **at mid-term: 756 - almost double than planned- young people finished at least half of the modules and 32 (76%) adults**
- # of Roma and non-Roma youth (F/M) report changed attitudes and/or behaviors on at least one of the LSE Program themes – **relevant comparison will be made at the project end after the end-line study is conducted and compared with the base line data collected.**
- # of people reached through min. 18 youth led community actions conducted on LSE topics (at the baseline: 18 campaigns to reach about 2.600 youth; **at the mid-term: 11 campaigns held or 61% overshooting the target by over 300 persons.**

**Output 2:** Improved access to and provision of services for RAE women and girls (in particular on Sexual, Reproductive & Maternal Health/SRMH, Gender Based Violence/GBV and Education) through strengthening of the Roma CSOs and the existing participatory accountability community mechanisms, in line with SDG 5.6.

The initially awarded five community sub-grants focusing on this output are still active and no change has taken place in terms of three countries and five lead partners implementing them in: BiH: Better Future, Tuzla & Otaharin, Bijeljina, both partnering with Romani Cej from Prnjavor; Serbia: Roma Women Center from Lazarevac with a Root of Roma & Romani Cikna from Krusevac and in Montenegro the sub-grantee is the Centre for Roma Initiatives (CRI) from Niksic. The activities are being conducted in 21 towns/municipalities/communities or settlements.

The key focus was put on testing more effective methods in improving the level of understanding, communication and collaboration between power holders/service provider and service users/Roma population. Therefore, partners were trained as facilitators in using CARE's Community Score Card (CSC) method, and where seen appropriate combined or supported by the tested tools from CARE's Social Analysis and Action.

After the initial suspicion toward the CSC method since it had was at first seen by partners as nothing new, 'this is what we have been doing already' type of indirectly expressed reaction, they embraced the CSC as a very useful tool and a new approach to their usual practice. A series of training sessions and individual consultations with CARE's Gender Coordinator were held and the more they understood the benefits the method and the process offer, the more they liked it. Their facilitation skills needed to be strengthened and a whole their attitude about the work they do, and their role reexamined. Namely, most Roma CSOs, our partners included, are used to providing the assistance and doing things for the Roma community. In the beginning the biggest challenge was to switch from being active service providers in this sub-grant, to being good facilitators and mediators by allowing both parties, the Roma communities in particular, take over more responsibility and a more active role in the process. Since acting independently and effectively requires a certain level of agency, the first months of the CSC introduction by partners focused on awareness raising sessions with the Roma communities, conducted either the partners or relevant government/institution representatives, to help the communities learn more about the services available, their rights and ways to how execute them.

The overview below presents in bold the key changes from the initial assessment of the indicators set: **Logframe – Baseline – Mid-term:**

- **Trained Roma CSOs/staff apply at least one of CARE's tested tools: Social Analysis and Action (SAA) and/or Community Score Card (CSC)** (at the baseline: 17 sub-grantees' staff members are intended to be trained) – **22 trained and 19 applying the gained skills (working as facilitators)**



- *At least 50 of power-holders (F/M) report improved skills to effectively fulfill their roles and mandate, through the support of CARE and partners* (at the baseline: a total of 68 government representatives are aimed to be included in the first cycle of CSC application) – **92 local government representatives (over 50% female) involved in the process and 130 Roma population (over 50% female)**
- *% of the targeted Roma population satisfied with their last experience of public services (F/M & sector)* (at the baseline: the partners estimated that there are about 2.400 RAE living in the 21 targeted communities; almost 24% have been surveyed with 67% being RAE women. 45.20% expressed their satisfaction with the last public services experience. Out of 314 of them or 54.80% who were not satisfied, the majority complained about the social welfare and health sectors) – the survey details below and attached. – **the survey will be conducted as part of the final evaluation**
- *# of people served/assisted through the work of mediators (F/M, type of assistance)* (at the baseline: 7 mediators engaged to provide assistance to 1.690 people) – **7 mediators (5 F/2 M) have provided 903 services to 835 people**
- *# of people reached through community actions carried out to promote improved services or advocate for improvement* (at the baseline: over 20 community actions planned to reach indirectly over 5.000 people). – **17 community actions held and reached over 1300 people.**

The initial steps carried out before spring 2020 were implemented as planned and looked very promising: CARE's training of partners' CSC facilitators, the implementation plan development and the initial meetings with the target Roma/Egyptian communities and the relevant institutions. However, the key segments of the process implementation like relationship and

Roma women now understand the importance of taking care of their own health. We have also managed to connect all the relevant institutions and to increase the level and quality of their collaboration.

*Anonymous, On-line Survey for stakeholders*

trust building, improved communication and understanding of different perspectives and priorities, ended up being heavily affected by the Corona crisis since they required a lot of discussions, joint action planning and active work on the ground. In terms of numbers of people engaged, as stated above, there is no serious sign of underperformance. Unfortunately, the issue is more about the consistency and quality of the process that should serve as a framework and a foundation for the sustainability of this approach or method. Therefore, the overall impression is that although the benefits of the method have been recognized and the

idea embraced by all the parties, and pretty well organized and performed by the partners, the fulfilment of the goals set will take more time due to the interruptions caused by the restrictions introduced in all the target locations. However, due to the solid start and the plans in place, it is fair to assume that all partners will be successful in accomplishing to meet the goals set if the situation with the pandemic allows.

Here is a brief overview of what the sub-grantees have managed to accomplish so far when it comes to the application of the Community Score Card method with the selected Roma communities as right holders/service users and the relevant local government representatives/institutions as power holders/service providers:

**BiH: Better Future** was successful in connecting the local government of the Lukavac Municipality in the vicinity of the town of Tuzla and representatives and the Roma community of Poljice in the same Municipality. The priority identified and raised by both sides was the low primary school attendance by the Roma children, due to the high unemployment rate and poverty of the Roma community, relating to parents in particular. With help of the skilled facilitator, the Municipality ensured schoolbooks and accessories for free for 60 Roma children (40% girls) for the school year 2019/2020. This has enabled them to feel equal and attend school like all other children and has also helped parents be supportive of this process. Better future team has managed to arrange with the Municipality to allocate the funds for the same

purpose for the next school year and will be monitoring the implementation while at the same time starting the process of identifying either a different priority with the same community or start the CSC application in another location (depending on the Covid-19 related measures). Observation: The Better Future team understands the method and was very active in seeking advice and support during the entire process and it is fair to expect they will successfully continue testing the approach and increase further increase their skills.

**Otaharin:** The team started the process simultaneously in four Roma communities in the Bijeljina area with some 730 Roma inhabitants. As a result of the initial scoring process with those communities, sexual and reproductive health of Roma women and girls surfaced as a priority. Namely, a low number of Roma women and adolescent girls going for regular gynecological checkups is worrying as a result of the lack of awareness on their side and the lack of genuine interest and care on the side of health workers as service providers. Observation: Although a series of awareness raising sessions with the service users was held as well as meetings with the service providers, and checkups done for eleven women/girls, there is evident lack of interest on both sides to seriously address this issue leading toward a longer-term change. It seems that their reluctance to accept the responsibility as well as the reliance on Otaharin as a mediator and facilitator is too high. The sub-grant team will need hands on assistance in rethinking the process and starting afresh with a different approach and topic at the same community or testing the method in with a brand-new Roma community/location.

**Serbia: Roma Women's Center (RWC) Veliki Crljeni,** Lazarevac worked in two Roma communities with the population of over 250 in the Municipalities of Lazarevac and Lajkovac. A solid plan and a step-by-step approach were crucial in getting both parties - Roma community representatives and the local government – on the same page to collaborate and find a solution to the priority issues identified. The distance of the both Roma settlements and a very poor public transport connection (twice a day only, with no bus line at during school breaks) surfaced as a key problem for the Roma to live their life like others do. It would take them all day to go to the nearest town to run some errands, go for a medical check-up, or access social or status related services. As a result of the Municipality and the RWC negotiations with the public transport company, three more regular bus lines daily have been introduced, which will enable Roma people independently and on a more regular basis attend to their needs. RWC will continue monitoring the implementation of this officially signed agreement and has already embarked to deal with the second ranked priority: lack of care of Roma for their overall physical health, in particular sexual and reproductive of Roma women and girls, due to the lack of accessibility of the health specialist/clinics or the level of quality of the available services. Therefore, the idea of 'health on wheels' – mobile clinic with general practitioners as well as specialized doctors that would visit each Roma settlement at least twice a year – was developed and the talks with the interested parties has started. To make it financially sustainable, the RWC with help of the team for improvement of the situation of the Roma have initiated with the Municipal Council of Lazarevac a revision/update of the Local Action Plan to introduce this activity and ensure adequate budgeting. Observation: The team has approached the CSC process very seriously which resulted in a detailed implementation plan, assessment of risks and mitigation measures put in place at the very beginning. They've also tested two of the SAA tools which they found extremely useful for the work with the Roma community as part of the priority setting preparatory sessions (Gender Box and Problem Tree Analysis) The first goal has been accomplished and a new priority identified. There is a high probability that CSC method will be successfully embraced and tested on one or two more key issues before the project is over.

On the one hand, the Roma can be reluctant to taking responsibility since most are used to receiving humanitarian assistance and welfare. On the other, the distrust toward local government as allies is high due to the long history of discrimination and false hopes of a better service provision raised by the local politicians usually before the elections.

*RWC Veliki Crljeni, Serbia*

**Romani Cikna, Krusevac:** The team decided to do the initial ‘introduction to the CSC method and prioritizing needs meetings’ with all five Roma communities they had selected. Women’s health, role of the women in the household, domestic violence and early marriage prevention, and education scored the highest. The Razanj community was the first one for testing the method and in collaboration with the local health clinic and very interested doctors the approach and the selected topic was women’s health – regular general and gynecological

It was crucial to have Roma men present at the community meetings. They knew that women don’t have it easy but had no idea how much they themselves help perpetuate behaviors that negatively affect health of their wives and daughters.

*Romani Cikna, Serbia*

checkups. A series of first raising awareness sessions by the doctors were organized in the communities, 11 checkups done and then everything stopped due to the Covid-19 lockdown and one third of the community members being infected. Some unfortunate facts have been reconfirmed that make a sustainable change take longer: the level of Roma community awareness about the need for taking care of their wellbeing is low, evident is the overall passive attitude and low interest in taking the responsibility for their health in combination with the expectation that they are the ones who need and receiving assistance. The community was very disappointed, say the facilitators, when they showed up

‘empty handed’. Observation: A very thorough plan and approach to ‘feel the pulse’ in all the five communities and the local officials and then decide where to start testing the method has lead to the preparation phase lasting longer which turned out to be an obstacle for finalizing the action plan due to the pandemic. However, the team has managed to identify and empower one local Roma women to act as a liaison for the Razanj community which should guarantee a smoother and quicker moving forward after the life goes back to normal more or less. There is a need to revisit the action plan by the team to establish how to make it more sustainable and not be perceived as a project based, one-time only externally organized medical examination for the Roma women and girls, like many others before.

**Montenegro, Center for Roma Initiatives (CRI):** The CRI team’s first action plan referred to the three Roma & Egyptian communities in the Niksic area. The issue prioritized after a series of meetings and the scoring process with the communities and the relevant institutions is domestic violence prevention, due to the noted increase of the reported incidents that don’t get dealt with effectively. The peer organization, SOS Hotline Niksic, the Police and Center for Social work held a series of workshops in the communities to raise awareness about the preventive measures and the protection mechanisms and services available. That was the only way to break dismantle beliefs and stereotypes about the role and attitudes of the government toward violence in the Roma/Egyptian communities (‘the police doesn’t come when an incident is reported, they just think it’s how they live their lives, there is no point in intervening’) and develop a relationship of trust. Observation: Due to the nature of the topic worked on, it will take time and close monitoring by CRI to see if better understanding and the established relationship of trust will gain better results in the number of incidents reported and resolved. In the meantime, due to the high number of the infected community members, the work had to be put on hold. In the meantime, CRI has started to work on the action plan for the CSC application in the Podgorica area.

In addition to the planned activities, CARE engaged the FAIRIII partners and their associates in the community actions specifically aimed at helping Roma and Egyptian communities with the **Covid-19 response**. Namely, several international and national donors provided assistance including hygiene kits and awareness raising and food packages that local Roma CSOs were best equipped and suited to assess the immediate needs and lead the distribution in their respective areas.

Here is a brief overview of their engagement that did not require any additional funding from the project budget: **BIH:** Better Future Tuzla: Distribution of food and hygiene kits for protection against Covid-19; **OTAHARIN** Bijeljina: Preparation and distribution of hygiene kits and

assistance to the elderly and vulnerable population. **Serbia:** OSVIT Nis: 24/7 on-call duty at the SOS Telephone, assistance to Roma children on remote learning; phone and online communication to assist women victims of GBV and to provide psychological support; in coordination with authorities, provision of information to the elderly about call centers and emergency services; delivery of hygiene kits. Romani Cikna Krusevac: Provision of hygiene kits, assistance to Roma children on remote learning; online psychosocial support. Women Roma Center Veliki Crljeni, Lazrevac: Assistance to Roma children on remote learning; provision of general assistance and online psychological support. **Montenegro:** Center for Roma Initiatives, Niksic: Distribution of hygiene kits, distribution of food packages, follow up of cases of GBV, awareness raising activities on threats and preventive measures.

**Output 3:** Three national-level Roma women networks' influence and regional collaboration enhanced through the regional Roma Women Balkans Network efforts toward Post 2020 EU Roma Integration Agenda

The establishment of the Roma Women Balkans Network was to increase the visibility and the voice of Roma Women from the Balkans as they are frequently left out of international processes concerning Roma women. This level of engagement is planned to be emphasized in the second part of the project implementation while the first part was more focused on putting the foundations in place to allow for increased opportunities for joint cooperation, sharing and better collaboration between the regional network members as well as between them and other Roma women movements. However, there is another layer to this output, and it relates to the national level Roma women networks. Due to the complexity of this expected result, the overview below presents the main accomplishments from the first half of the project through the main activity/budget lines that are leading to meeting the higher level indicators in the period to follow after the mid-term evaluation:

- The **Balkan Network of Roma Women** has been established in November 2019 by 21 participants representing three national Roma women networks, Roma women representatives from Croatia, North Macedonia and Kosovo. A total of two meetings were held and the Statute of the network developed. The workshop planned for 2020 had to be postponed due to the pandemic (activity/budget line #3.1) as well as the Regional Conference (#3.4).
- There are **three national Roma network Coordinators** hired via partner organizations (Better Future in BiH, Romani Cikna in Republic of Serbia and CRI in Montenegro in charge for their employment contracts and related administrative obligations) on a 29-month contract full time basis. Their role is to strengthen and increase the capacity of the network members and the representation of the network at the national and regional levels. The Coordinators represent the BiH 'Success' Roma Network, The 'Roma Women Network of Serbia' and the Montenegrin Network 'The First'. The Coordinator in Montenegro had left and was replaced by a new person. The networks consist of both individual Roma female activists or Roma CSOs. The Coordinators are actively engaged in assisting members communicate and collaborate better, promote the networks' role and accomplishments (visibility), and assist individual partners with technical assistance. The Coordinators also play a role in media analysis, project design and development for members and the network as well as producing policy papers for lobbying and advocacy purposes (activity/budget line #3.2).
- One set of activities (activity/budget line #3.3.) relates to the **national network Coordinators' capacity building** on facilitation, coordination, admin skills. All three took part in the workshop on media analysis and two (BiH and MNE) successfully finished one level (B1) of the English language course. The new MNE Coordinator should be enrolled in the same course. Together they have analyzed over 100 media articles to guide actions and the Roma women empowerment discourse with the local and national government representatives. Many community actions and lobbying efforts have also been shared via social media to raise the profile and keep the audience informed about network activities.

- **Capacity building of the national network members/meetings and educational workshops** (activity/budget line 3.5): A total of four workshops were held, one was held at the regional level on media analysis and how to develop a press clipping. Further, additional three, one per target county were held for the national network members: in BiH: on how to take better care of oneself and avoid burnout; in Serbia on the development of an Action Plan for the Roma Women's Network for 2020 and on the development of proposals for the 2019 16 Days of Activism campaign and in Montenegro: for the wider Roma community representatives to raise interest in joining the network 'First' resulting in the new action plan for the network to formalize its status.
- **Network members monitor policy implementation, conduct analysis, produce policy papers/case studies** (#3.6) Partners took part in revising and providing recommendations to eight Roma/women related government strategic documents and have themselves started working on the following: The network in BiH and Montenegro are working on the policy papers on the effects of the pandemic in the Roma and Egyptian communities and the institutional response provided by the government. The aim is to determine in what way and to what extent has the situation with COVID-19 affected the Roma communities, with special emphasis on the socio - economic, educational, gender - health aspect and the increase in domestic violence incidents. In addition, the BiH network Success has developed a network Strategy and an Action Plan to guide their joint activities at the national level. Two LAPs -local action plans for the social integration of Roma men and women have been planned but then postponed due to the pandemic related measures introduced.
- **Lobbying and Advocacy Initiatives organized** (#3.7) A series of workshops, awareness raising sessions and media presentations were organized by partners in all three countries for the "16 days of activism" 2019 annual international campaign that kicks off on 25 November, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, and runs until 10 December, Human Rights Day. This is a campaign that project partner organizations & the Roma women networks take part in to raise their voices for societies free from violence against women and girls.

**Output 4:** Roma women and girls, CSOs and Networks are a part of the regional and global social movement initiatives promoting and advocating for gender equality and (minority) women's rights.

The focus on the expected results was planned for the years 2020 and 2021. Due to the nature of these activities that require travelling across borders and gathering of bigger groups of people, most of the activities had to be postponed because of the pandemic related restrictions introduced by the government of the region, Europe and globally.

The overview below presents the main accomplishments from the first half of the project:

- # and % of projects/initiatives that link or work with strategic alliances and partners to take tested and effective solutions to scale: **The training for partners and Roma CSO Networks on Movement building has been postponed for 2021.**
- # and type of CARE/partner-supported collective actions (e.g. regional social norms campaign) movements, to present marginalized people's demands to power-holders - Networking and network members take part in regional and global events, conferences and campaigns: The International **Holocaust Commemoration** "Dikh he na bister" (See and don't forget) held during the summer of 2019 in Krakow organized a series of workshops, conferences and panels in Auschwitz to mark the International Day of Remembrance for Roma Victims of the Holocaust. Project partner Otaharin from BiH took ten young Roma (five boys and five girls) who were supported by the project to take part. The event gathered 1.000 people from NGOs and institutions from twenty-four countries. Through five-day workshops participants were able to understand how much Roma life had been subjected to severe mistreatment in society and how much Roma had been discriminated against throughout history. Participants at this event also

had the opportunity to deepen their knowledge of discrimination cases and ways to protect themselves.

- # and type of improvements undertaken as result of organizational interventions: **four partner organizations were supported** during the first half of the project based on the applications submitted justifying the needs/request. The partner from Krusevac and Niksic (Romani Cikna and CRI) were provided with the hardware for four computers, while Osvit and RWC Veliki Crijeni were enabled to have their organizational websites developed and the staff members trained to maintain the content/update them on a regular basis.

**Question 5.3.2: What actors/ procedures/ implementation methods have proved to be crucial for achieving the objectives so far & what factors are hindering the achievement of the objectives?**

**Finding 5 (L):** CARE's expert support, flexibility in management as well as willingness to test new methods and approaches has been assessed as crucial and successful. The external circumstances related to Covid-19 pandemic has been repeatedly emphasized by both partner organizations and other stakeholders as the main negative/hindering factor that has affected the project implementation.

First of all, many partners have acknowledged CARE's continued genuine interest and participatory approach in project design reflecting partners feedback and suggestions as well as expressed their gratitude for CARE's and donor's support and flexibility in the times of crisis (pandemic) that enabled the Roma partners be present in their communities and provide so much needed encouragement and concrete assistance to the population. Over 68% of the surveyed partner representative's thing that the project management has been excellent.

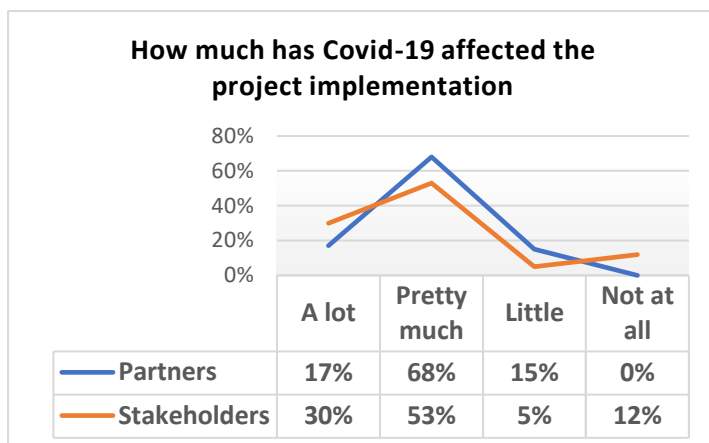
Secondly, programmatically, having mediators act as 'general practitioners' continues to be seen as important since they play a huge role in the communities by addressing a whole set of priority issues – here is very important that all of the mediators are aware that the end goal is to helping those they serve learn how to solve problems themselves to avoid any co-dependence. By introducing the Community Score Card all of them have managed to raise their facilitation skills and embraced the new method that they are now learning to use. Many claimed that it looked pretty complicated at the beginning and not really relevant, since they

Kudos to the CARE team who are always there for us. They readily go out of their way to help us deal with an issue and invest maximum effort to meet our needs.

*Anonymous, On-line Survey for partners*

as mediators as well as the Roma CSOs had been helping the Roma communities for decades. It took some time for them to realize what are the longer term benefits of having a process plan in place and act a connector and bridge builder, as a broker rather than doing the job of the service users and/or service providers for issues that require a systemic win-win resolution. And finally, the introduction of the LSE into schools and communities with help of the YMI partners has also been assessed as extremely beneficial, from several perspectives: not only as filling the gap

presented by the lack of such an approach (peer education) or the LSE's thematic focus on what really is needed and welcomed by both teachers and the students (confirmed by the baseline research findings) but also raised capacities of the Roma CSOs staff members and having the adequate manuals in the local languages to be used after the project is finished. In terms of the **limiting factors**, nothing else surfaced but the Covid-19 related issues that have already been described in the previous chapters. On the one hand, they slowed down or postponed the activities planned, on the other it presents a serious safety issue for all of the involved. However, many have again recognized how helpful it was to have CARE guide them through revisiting the risk mitigation measures and putting a new structure and action steps in place, that was very reassuring during the first wave in particular when everyone was taken by surprise and pretty much spaced out. Here are some quotes from the surveys to better depict how people feel about the pandemic when it comes to FAIRIII implementation:



○ I miss the direct communication. The entire focus has shifted toward survival and health and receiving humanitarian assistance, while other problems have been pushed to the back burner for now.

○ A very small number of Roma children have computers or laptops and the internet, they get excluded from the online education.

○ We were not able to

conduct workshops, that's such a shame, we were not allowed to have many children in one place.

- It is great that we are helping people in need, but we worry as we expose ourselves to huge risk every single day by going into the communities.

**Question 5.3.3: Has the monitoring system been appropriate to gain comprehensive qualitative and quantitative evidence about outputs/outcomes and impact of the project?**

**Finding 6 (P):** There is a monitoring mechanism in place for tracking and collecting both quantitative and qualitative gender and age/age group disaggregated data (**partially achieved**)

The monitoring plan is in place. There are adequate excel spreadsheets developed by the project Coordinator, already piloted in the previous project cycles and partners trained on how to use them. Their format has been adjusted to the FAIRIII needs/indicators and present an effective quantitative monitoring tool. Their application allows a continuous, regular and unified quantitative data collection related to each of the indicators, plus the media promotion. The partners have been trained how to use it since all of them have the same type of a table and the data which enables the analysis and synthesis across the board, based on gender, age group, ethnicity, activity or a group of activity. The tables of each implementing partner can be summarized on the country basis or regionally, which makes the quantity and quality of the data conducive to manipulation as per need. They offer a total number of participants who were involved in the activities, as well as a table showing a number of individuals reached (one person recorded for one activity only).

The partners have already been previously encouraged to use the qualitative data collection method in a form of the Most Significant Story to capture intended and unintended changes happening at different levels (organizational, individual, community) from the perspective of staff, participants and other stakeholders like teachers, police officers or social and health workers engaged in the project. Thus, there is no genuine interest and the capacity for 'telling a story of change' in any shape or form is pretty weak. Apart from the shift of focus due to the pandemic, CARE team and partners should look for ways how to meet the gap of presenting the qualitative data in a simple yet appealing way for different type of audiences. Maybe instead of written stories, a short video clips taken by a mobile phone could do the trick or any other creative, innovative method.

CARE Project Manager and Coordinator have done their best to apply all the precaution measures and protect themselves and partners but still continue more or less regular monitoring through visiting of the organizations and/or some of their events plus using skype calls, zoom/teams sessions, emails and reporting for following the implementation. All the lessons, strengths and weaknesses, potential good models of work and examples are being shared and fed back into improving the project implementation.

#### Evaluation criterion: 5.4. Efficiency – How well are the resources used?

**Question: 5.4.1 Has the relationship between the devoted resources and results been appropriate and justifiable?**

**Finding 7 (F):** The project has achieved the best value for money – **fully achieved** for the given evaluation period

The project design, as well as the resources devoted to each of the project segments, has been assessed as successful. The project participants highly value CARE's participatory approach and flexibility to meet the needs and limitations on the ground. The value for money unique for CARE's projects compared to some other donors is that the sub-grants last longer and therefore the dynamic of the implementation uninterrupted. The portion covering certain percentage of the operational lifts off the constant worry and functioning in the survival mode by the partners which helps them concentrate on the project implementation rather than covering the basic utilities. The hiring of the full-time network facilitators/coordinators is another example of CARE' thinking out of the box approach in responding to the needs and partner suggestions. The interviewees claimed that the amounts of the sub-grants are still relevant and in line with their grant applications in terms of budget allocations and that CARE team is open to assist them in a timely manner if any justified re-allocations need to happen.

However, the administrative/financial system and requirements have been mentioned as limiting and time consuming. To prepare all the paperwork and do the reporting well takes a lot of time and human capacity. It is definitely a great learning opportunity for the Roma CSOs, still a bit too overbearing at times. CARE's overall management and coordination has been praised and commended along the evaluation process, since the core team is working professionally and fully dedicated, in a transparent, respectful and participatory manner.

**Evaluation criterion: 5.5 Road to Impact & Sustainability – up to the point of the evaluation – What difference is the intervention making & What aspects have the biggest potential for long term effects/changes?**

**Question 5.5.1: Is there any evidence that the Project has potential to impact considerably upon the lives of the beneficiaries and What actions/results can be expected to be maintained after this intervention ends?**

**Finding 8:** Solid evidence the project has been collected on a regular basis and used to inform the improved project management points to the key changes and the activities with the highest potential to last after the project is over (**P-partially achieved**).

The Covid-19 pandemic has been recognized by all the partners and external stakeholders as the **main cause for unintended changes** that have taken place during the course of the project. As already described, it has affected all segments of the project implementation as well as its key actors. The measures imposed by the governments in the three target countries have kept everyone on their toes due to the fast-changing circumstances there were under no ones' control challenging on a daily basis the planning of the project operation. Still, many of the project activities took place, some had to be postponed to a later project stage or were switched to the online wherever possible. Although the Covid-19 pandemic is hard to predict, CARE team and partners strongly believe that the project outcome will be accomplished in its planned or slightly adjusted form.

The results accomplished so far together with those that should be successfully achieved in the following year and a half, will lead toward the set theory of change and improvements in all three domains of change according to ADCs and CARE's Gender Equality Framework – agency, relations and structural level with the gender transformative lens across all the indicators. Here are the key project components with solid foundations set and a high potential for sustainability and impact:



- **Life skills education:** The Baseline research on the level of changes in knowledge, attitudes and behaviours of the youth and adults in the targeted schools and communities was successfully conducted and clearly shows the connections between the identified and what the project is addressing. In addition, the local Roma and non-Roma young men and women have been trained as peer educators, a very good relationship with the school staff and the Roma leaders have been established and support ensured. The schools and communities have the LSE manual translated and at their disposal to be further copied and used available in the local language and last but not least, the collaboration between the more experienced YMI partners and the FAIRIII sub-grants have been strengthened and could lead to different types of close partnerships in the future – for joint project implementation in-country and cross border as well as for the movement ‘Future 4 Youth’ building that the YMI partners have started. What the project team should more explore in the next phase, depending on the situation with the pandemic are these two opportunities: YMI youth partner organizations have a) produced a set of online tools and educational material that should be explored and utilized by the FAIRIII partners and b) have the experience and the process in place for conducting the end-line research online if the circumstances won’t allow for the face-to-face implementation.
- **Community Score Card (CSC):** Although this new method had been at first perceived as ‘impossible’ to implement in the Balkans context, as some partners have put it, it has proved to be an excellent tool for the Roma CSOs to become much more strategic in their thinking and acting. By learning how to plan and facilitate the process, they are now more focused on how to better connect and empower, on the one hand power holders as service providers, and on the other the Roma communities as right holders and service users to look for systemic solutions and take the responsibility for their roles in the relationship. The few successful examples described under the ‘effectiveness - output 2 section’ of how an issue can be resolved in the areas to the benefit of all the involved will not change things overnight, but presents a good practice that is perceived by most of the partners as having a great potential for being used as a new model of working when it comes to the accessibility and quality of service provision in the future. The key changes identified relate to the following: a) increased facilitation capacities of the mediators, b) the awareness and more active engagement of the Roma community representatives into the problem solving (from passive service/assistance receivers to active change agents), c) better understanding of the Roma community about their rights but also obligations as well as d) the changed perspective and attitudes of the government institution officials toward the Roma community leading toward more engaged interest and involvement.
- **The national Roma women networks and the regional Balkan Network of Roma Women:** In this segment the changes have been clearly noticed and reported on all three levels as well: From the agency level through individual skills and knowledge building of Roma women and organizational strengthening to enabling connecting and collaboration of the Roma and non Roma civil society actors at the national and regional levels to the transformation in structures by influencing the local and national policies and strategies related to Roma and gender equality. Having Roma women coordinating the national networks has been recognized as a crucial move to raise the networks’ role, recognition and influence by the Roma communities, Roma male leaders in particular, the government as well as to have the networks seen as potentially being more united and playing a more significant role in the regional and global movements on women’s and minority rights, gender equality and social justice. The sustainability aspect has been increased with the a) Coordinators and partners working more

After the LSE workshops in our school kids would share the newly acquired knowledge with their parents at home and engage in exchanges on new skills with their peers.

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intensely on fundraising by applying as a network or a group of organizations (nationally and cross-border) on calls thereby potentially diversifying and strengthening their funding base; b) being regularly present in the media and the public for a and following the trends that inform the networks priorities and c) intensified and more professional part taking in creating or revising relevant national strategies and action plans as well as taking part in assessments on the progress of the target governments in meeting the international treaties and obligations (EU progress reports on women and minority rights, CEDAW, Istanbul Convention etc.)

- **Ownership:** Although CARE's role and importance in the management and coordination of the activities is still seen as crucial, compared to the previous FAIR phases, an increased level of empowerment, responsibility and independence has been noted. All project stakeholders understand that the current crisis stricken circumstances require a high degree of flexibility but also personal responsibility and commitment of all the involved actors as well as a high level of mutual support and collaboration that even exceeds the expectations set in a different context before the project start.

## 6. Conclusions

This section summarizes the analysis of results accomplished based on the evaluation criteria and questions set forth in the Evaluation Matrix (Annex 3):

- ✓ **Relevance, Design & Coherence:** The project has been assessed as highly relevant and aligned with the national and international priorities as countries in the EU accession process, confirming that the timing as well as the thematic scope has been well identified by CARE and the partners. On that track, the project logic has been described as comprehensive, well designed, based on lessons learned from the previous phase, developed in a transparent and participatory process with a holistic and a well balanced approach toward addressing burning issues –but also taking into consideration the local, national and regional needs, capacities of local organizations and specifics of the local gaps and context. All the four expected results or outputs are mutually reinforcing and clearly leading toward meeting the specific project objective. They are thereby significantly contributing to the overall project objective which is not achievable by CARE and partners alone over a three year period but is paving a road toward improved socio-economic circumstances and a dignified life free from violence, inequality and discrimination for Roma, women and girls in particular, in the target communities.

CARE's model of working in partnership with local organizations where they actually implement the project, while CARE maintains a role of a mentor, coordinator, broker and facilitator has been assessed as positive and beneficial for empowering local actors to become catalysts of change.

- ✓ **Effectiveness & Efficiency:** The evaluation findings about the level of contribution to the envisaged results are assessed overall as positive for the first 18 months of the implementation. Approximately, 2/3 of the intended activities have been conducted and the number of directly reached beneficiaries well on track or even more than planned which is a big success taking into consideration the Covid-19 pandemic and the imposed restrictions that have affected the last third of the assessed period in a way not ever experience before (globally, life threatening, highly infectious) that caused a lock down and serious interruptions of all aspects of free movement and work. However, the evidence shows that the empowering has happened at the individual, organizational levels as well as been reflected clearly in improved relationships among national and regional key partners, Roma partners and local and national government institutions as well between the Roma community and the government representatives (increased understanding, acceptance and mutual trust).

Building on and expanding on FAIRII strategy to engage men and boys approach in empowering women and girls on promoting gender equality, healthy lifestyles and prevention of gendered and peer violence has been extremely well received and further developed. The CSC (Community Score Card) and to a lesser degree SAA (Social Analysis and Action) have proven to be useful, however there is still space for improvement in testing the tools and methods for qualitative data collection and analysis as well as exploring online options that would enable and support innovative and creative expressions and initiatives. While the availability and access to the quality IT equipment and solid internet connectivity can be a problem for the Roma youth and communities, mobile phones are being widely used. The activities related to good practice identification and case study development should be prioritized to the extent possible (in particular for the life skills education, community score card implementation and the Balkans network accomplishments as part of the wider regional or global movements). In addition, CARE has used the available resources strategically and efficiently and the overall management has been assessed as effective, supportive and nurturing.

- ✓ Impact & Sustainability: In spite of the negative effects of the pandemic, the level of impact and high sustainability potential has been recognized in the first three outputs, youth life skills education and community grants and the national and regional Roma women network. The fourth output is yet to be fully addressed and will depend on the circumstances and the opportunities for travelling and gathering of bigger groups of people. On the building agency domains of change – the empowerment of individual Roma women has happened, from the Roma CSO/NGO staff employed over a longer period of time (salary portion vs. fees) and building their technical and soft skills reporting feeling more self-confident and stronger with increased facilitation and relationship building skills. Organizationally, a large majority of partners/sub-grantees report on increased organizational capacities sustainability, improved management practices, strengthened teams, increased recognition and visibility, also reflected in the fact that more Roma women are involved in local and national working groups on strategies/action plans development, monitoring. Relations are also being established and improved through mutual exchange and learning not only among project partners regionally, but also among government counterparts from the three countries. Transforming structures by changing norms and attitudes as well as increased influence on the laws and practices is happening as a result of FAIRIII (CEDAW shadow report and LAPs developments, prevention of forced ad child marriage practices, improved level of sexual and reproductive health practices) where Roma women get recognized as important actors in their families, communities and by the government, their voice is being heard and their rights and participation considered.

The project has helped us build trust between our community and the local institutions; the communication is more open.

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## 7. Recommendations<sup>2</sup>

1. Due to the insecurities related to the Covid-19 pandemic and not really knowing what activities will be allowed to be implemented, CARE and partners should reassess the level and type of risks and develop a new implementation plan based on at least a couple of potential scenarios with clear and realistic mitigation measures in place.

<sup>2</sup> A more detailed description of the first set of recommendations is presented in Annex\_2: Management Response Format

2. Several partners have emphasized that they are aware how their health risks should be taken into serious consideration when planning for the activities taking place in the Roma communities.
3. Since FAIRIII is most likely not to be continued in this shape and form, partners should with CARE's help develop sustainability plans to address needs, challenges and opportunities for the year 2022 and further. CARE should help them with advice on how to best address the regional collaboration and exchange component into those individual plans. Building on the identified impact multipliers (the activities identified as having the highest potential for scaling up)
4. FAIRIII LSE Coordinators should connect with the YMI mentors and other YMI partners and utilize the educational and awareness raising resources available in the local languages, get ideas for promotion via social media as well as join the Future4You movement in the development.
5. Continue with testing of the CSC application in new communities or the same communities but on different priorities by focusing on 'quick gains' – services that can be resolved and made sustainable over a shorter period of time. On the one hand it would help all the actors involved gain more experience while the expert assistance from CARE is available, and on the other additionally build trust and independence from Roma CSOs as sole service providers for the Roma population. In that way, the pressure on the community mediators would also decrease and they could have more time to deal with complex and specific issues of individual people and families.
6. Partners should focus more on how to present the qualitative data or accomplishments, changes at all three levels, individual/personal or organizational, in relationships built and structures transformed in a creative and innovative ways– an additional workshop for raising motivation and skills could be organized.
7. Continue strengthening the fundraising activities with partners, either provide assistance for identifying new/potential donors or proposal development for individual Roma organizations, national networks or for cross-border/regional network initiatives.
8. If the circumstances allow, put more focus on meeting the indicators related to the last output and find ways (virtual spaces) to connect and take part with relevant global movements.

## **8. Annexes**

- 8.1. Result-Assessment**
- 8.2. Management Response**
- 8.3. Evaluation Matrix**
- 8.4. EC Progress Report Summary**
- 8.5. List of Interviewees**