

## The illegal sterilization of Roma women in Kosovo

### 1. Topic of the strategy

*Formulate and describe the topic of your strategy regarding gender mainstreaming in Kosovo (e.g. equal pay, equal parental leave, protection against gender-based violence, equal property rights, and so on...)*

This strategy focuses on grave infringement of human rights, which is forced or coerced sterilizations of women especially of Roma, Ashkali or Egyptian community.

Coerced sterilizations fall within international classification of sexual violence along with forced abortions, forced prostitution, rape and other sexual crimes. It is an infringement into integrity and decency of a human being and has wide psychological and social consequences for the victims.

The issue, which is being dealt with on an international scale (whether historically or in present days), does not avoid Kosovo. Renowned human rights organizations have presented the public with a number of cases of forced sterilizations, however none of the cases were properly investigated upon and there is not a debate happening, which does not help the victims and therefore not even the society as a whole. Furthermore, Kosovo loses in its attempts to align their regime and institutions with highly developed western countries.

### 2. Current situation

*Describe the current situation relevant to your chosen topic in Kosovo. What issues does the society face concretely?*

Kosovar criminal code states forced or coerced sterilization as a crime. Kosovo is also a party to many international treaties and declarations on protection of the rights of women and against gender discrimination, such as the Universal convention on human rights, the Istanbul convention, Convention against torture and illegal treatment and so on.

Forced sterilization has been recognized as a crime among all the countries of former Yugoslavia within the International criminal tribunal for former Yugoslavia, as it fulfills the definition of genocide.

There have been reports on forced or coerced sterilization by renowned human rights organizations, such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch or the United Nations.

The local non-governmental organization Voice of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians in Kosovo is targeting the issue in individual cases, however there has not been a campaign targeted at the phenomenon of illegal sterilization in general.

Illegal sterilization hugely affects lives of women and their families in general.

### 3. Objective of the strategy

*Formulate the objective of the strategy. What do you want to achieve? Is awareness-raising your goal, or do you want to use international human rights mechanisms to push through a change? Identify the obstacles on your way to achieving your goal.*

Initially, as there is no current discussion on the topic, the first objective is a campaign on raising sterilization as a phenomenon in Kosovar society. This discussion should serve as awareness-raising campaign to increase the knowledge of general public of the phenomenon, as well as to stress the need to address this issue and treat it on national level with inspiration from other countries, who have effectively addressed this topic. Such awareness-raising campaign should furthermore help erase the stigma of sterilization of the RAE community and others affected by it.

Another objective that concurs the campaign is accessible education for Roma women, as well as free healthcare and legal consultations. Such possibilities for the victims of illegal sterilization will allow them to combat the wrongdoing of the perpetrators and avoid further cases of forced or coerced sterilization.

The final objective is to start an international cooperation between the countries that have been facing the same issue as Kosovo, in order to exchange examples of good practices and to further elaborate on the topic as an opportunity to study different regimes.

### 4. Means to acquire your goal

*What is the action plan? What steps do you see as necessary to reach what you have set out in the previous question? Design your campaign.*

In order to spread the awareness on the topic of forced or coerced sterilizations, we plan to use social media platforms to start conversations about illegal sterilization and how it is being used against Roma women. There shall be a targeted campaign on social media and also a spot-on national TV with traditional media presence at various live events organized within the campaign, such as debates, discussions, talks and workshops. The campaign shall also include witness testimonies.

Various non-governmental organizations will be invited to participate in discussions and take actions toward education and awareness, such as Voice of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptians, Roma Forum Serbia, Young initiative for Human Rights and Network of Roma, Ashkali and Egyptian Women's Organizations of Kosovo.

In cooperation with experts from other countries, we shall draft a legal frame work for recognition and reimbursement of the victims of illegal sterilization.

We shall team up with health experts, legal and financial advisers to provide free legal, health and financial counselling to the victims of forced or coerced sterilization. These consultations shall also serve as a collection of data for monitoring the phenomenon.