



Advisory Statement on Roma Inclusion

Introduction

The Salvation Army is deeply committed to fighting for justice and the inclusion and dignity of Roma¹ across Europe. We seek to take a holistic, integrated and person-centred approach, acknowledging that the complex needs of the Roma population require multifaceted responses. We acknowledge that inclusion is a two-way process and that non-Roma as well as Roma communities both need to take steps to understand one another to be able to live together. The Salvation Army is committed to learning from and being challenged by the Roma as they enrich our organisation and church.

Relationship and community building

The Salvation Army effectively reaches Roma communities and has built a relationship of trust with Roma through the provision of social care services as well as through church community life and therefore has an authentic voice when representing Roma and advocating Roma inclusion. The Salvation Army supports the inclusion of Roma in areas of housing, education, employment and health as well as through the provision of emotional, spiritual and psycho-social support. We also offer reintegration programmes through our transnational network of national Roma Contact Persons. Furthermore we effectively employ Roma in the structures of our social services and church ministries and can therefore serve as a model of inclusion.

Giving Roma a voice

We are committed to combatting poverty and discrimination of Roma through advocacy and awareness-raising activities. We believe that Roma are the best people to speak out about the impact of discrimination on their families and communities. Being part of a large organization, The Salvation Army can give them the opportunity to be able to do this in spheres which have so far been inaccessible to them. The Salvation Army is committed to giving a strong voice to the Roma; to actively seek to open up possibilities for Roma to advocate at all levels on behalf of other Roma and to speak out against injustice.

Transformation of people and communities

The Salvation Army firmly believes in the transformation of individuals, neighbourhoods and communities. Whilst The Salvation Army provides material assistance when necessary, we believe that this is only part of complete restoration. We believe that Roma must be empowered to make changes for themselves; therefore the free-will and participation of Roma from the very beginning and at every level of all inclusion initiatives is essential to create ownership and to ensure dignity and respect of the individual. It is also essential to see a transformation of the non-Roma population and civic authorities to fight prejudice and discrimination towards this group, through a better understanding of the Roma cultures and history. Anti-gypsyism and racist rhetoric is unacceptable and has no place in today's Europe.

A long-term vision

The strategy of the Salvation Army differs from that of others in that we offer not only short-term interventions and project-based initiatives, but we are committed for the long-term to ensure our presence from one generation to the

¹ The term "Roma" refers to Roma, Sinti, Kale and related groups in Europe, including Travellers and covers the wide diversity of the groups concerned, including persons who identify themselves as Gypsies.

next in order to foster the sustainable development of the community where we are working. The Salvation Army has many years of experience and expertise working together with Roma and other marginalised and vulnerable minority groups and a long history of experience in collaborating with other NGOs, agencies and churches in order to address different needs in the society.

An EU Framework

Given that there is now a European Framework for National Roma Integration Strategies (up to 2020) and the consequent National Roma Integration Strategies (NRIS) established in 2012, we believe the European Union has made an important step in its commitment to improving the lives of Roma. However change will only happen if governments follow up their promises with genuine action backed by realistic budgets and through partnership with civil society organisations with expertise in Roma issues, such as The Salvation Army.

Background and context

The Roma is Europe's largest minority group with a presence in almost all Member States. However many Roma continue to experience situations of extreme poverty and social exclusion. Poor health, low levels of education, inadequate housing conditions and high levels of unemployment are prevalent among Roma communities. Furthermore, Roma suffer from a long history of discrimination, evictions and overall marginalisation.

Whilst many Roma are citizens of the European Union they do not currently enjoy many of the social rights that European citizens are entitled to. Lack of appropriate documentation, including birth and marriage certificates, residence permits and identification documents prevent many Roma from accessing the social and health services they need.

Although most Roma are now sedentary, having initially settled in Eastern and central Europe from the 14th century, a number of Roma are now migrating across Europe. Since the expansion of the EU, open borders have opened up new paths for EU citizens, including Roma to travel to Western European countries or Scandinavia either in search of short-term work or to immigrate permanently in hope of a better life. In such situations, Roma may have different needs than those who remain in their countries of origin; however they often still suffer from discrimination and poverty in the country of destination. In the case of migrating Roma, reconnection activities of The Salvation Army will be invaluable.

Grounds for the position of The Salvation Army

The Salvation Army believes all people are created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26) and therefore all have a unique and intrinsic value. Therefore all people should be treated with dignity and respect regardless of their ethnicity or social situation. The Bible clearly speaks about the importance of social justice and defending the rights of the poor and speaking on the behalf of the voiceless, the need to care for others and the possibility for transformation of lives.

Proverbs 31:8-9: 'Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy'

Leviticus 19:33-34: 'And if a stranger dwells with you in your land, you shall not mistreat him. The stranger who dwells among you shall be to you as one born among you''

2 Corinthians 5:17: 'Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!'

Romans 12:2: 'And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect'

Furthermore The Salvation Army is committed to learn from and with the Roma as they minister amongst us;

Isaiah 55: 5: "Surely you will summon nations you know not, and nations you do not know will come running to you, because of the LORD your God, the Holy One of Israel, for he has endowed you with splendour."

Consequently The Salvation Army believes that it is called work with and empower the Roma to defend their social rights, to help lift Roma out of poverty, but also to create a space for God to do transformational work in our lives.

Practical responses

The Salvation Army seeks to advocate social justice and social and human rights for Roma, at local, national and European level. The Salvation Army will continue to provide social assistance, emotional and spiritual support through their social services as well as through church congregational life. Given the community-based nature of The Salvation Army churches and social services, we are in an ideal position to reach Roma at the grass roots level.

For The Salvation Army

1. Through its constituent territories, corps, centres and individual members, The Salvation Army continues to plan and undertake culturally and biblically appropriate responses which will help to reduce the poverty and social exclusion experienced by Roma communities and individuals.
2. The Salvation Army recognizes that inclusion is a two-way process, whereby both the Roma and non-Roma commit to work and minister together.
3. The Salvation Army is committed to building bridges between people and communities, with the help of Roma mediators from within the Roma communities.
4. The Salvation Army recognises that not all Roma groups are homogenous; rather there is a rich diversity of cultures, traditions and languages. The Salvation Army will respect and value the Roma languages and stand up for the right of the Roma to use their language as part of their identity and culture.
5. The Salvation Army is committed to fight against the discrimination, racism and xenophobic attitudes towards Roma that exist in today's society.
6. The Salvation Army commits to undertake education and awareness raising activities to promote to improved mutual understanding of cultural strengths, capacities and contributions to society.
7. The Salvation Army seeks to develop strategies and methods to work alongside Roma to enable access to social rights through mutual learning and developing relevant partnerships.
8. The Salvation Army commits to engaging Roma in its social service staffing and in positions of church ministry and will train Roma to take on leadership roles within the Army.
9. The Salvation Army remains flexible and open to learning in its working methods and should be capable of changing how it works, taking into consideration the itinerant life-style of some Roma.
10. The Salvation Army is committed to learning from and being challenged by the Roma.
11. The Salvation Army is committed to further train and educate our workers and volunteers in Roma cultures and take mutual steps in understanding our own and others' identity to foster relationships of trust.
12. The Salvation Army is committed to maintaining where possible a transnational network of National Contact Persons responsible for fighting for justice and the inclusion and dignity of Roma.
13. The Salvation Army calls upon Salvationists and other Christians worldwide to seek God's face and pray for the Roma population.

For the EU and Member States

1. The Salvation Army calls on the **EU Member States** to implement its National Roma Integration Strategy (NRIS) by 2020 and to commit to following up the strategy after 2020, maintaining positive progress made as well as establishing new and ambitious goals.

2. The Salvation Army calls on the European Commission to closely monitor the implementation of the National Roma Integration Strategies and work with the Member States to follow up on shortcomings.
3. The Salvation Army calls on the governmental **National Roma Contact Points of the EU Member States** to consult and work with civil society, including the Salvation Army in the implementation and monitoring of the NRIS.
4. The Salvation Army encourages **local and national authorities** to support the social inclusion of Roma by providing resources (including financial) specifically made available for this target group, whilst prioritising their inclusion into the mainstream social care system. Short-term project money should not replace long-term sustainable core funding for social care services.

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