

## Review and reorientation of the “Programme for active health protection of mothers and children” for greater health equity in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia

ROMA HEALTH — CASE STUDY SERIES NO. 2





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**Abstract**

This publication presents the process of and lessons learned from the review and reorientation of a programme for active health protection of mothers and children for greater health equity, with an explicit but not exclusive focus on the Roma population, carried out in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Using the methodological guide on integrating equity into health strategies, programmes and activities developed by the Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equality of Spain, the analysis of selected services within the programme shows that Roma and rural women benefit less than women from urban areas and with more education. Barriers and facilitating factors for using the services were related to their availability, accessibility and acceptability, contact with services and effectiveness of coverage. The review showed that barriers and facilitating factors were strongly related to the social determinants of health, both intermediary and structural. The analysis of the programme's context shows that most of the existing policy documents support its implementation and a number of mechanisms for social participation of target populations. Several facilitating factors were created and incorporated into the new proposed programme to improve the response to the health needs of all women in general and particularly the most vulnerable, such as Roma. The study concluded that the reorientation process is a systematic evaluation process, useful as a continuous cycle of improvement that could enhance the equity, effectiveness and quality of health programmes.

**Keywords**

Children, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, mothers, national health programmes, Romany, socioeconomic factors

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ISBN 978 92 890 5090 6

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### **The Series**

The Roma Health — Case Study Series provides a forum for sharing knowledge on how to improve the health and well-being of the Roma population in the WHO European Region. The aim of the papers is to review the evidence and country experiences with an eye to understanding practice and innovative initiatives, and encouraging debate on the connections between Roma health, its social determinants and the broader policy environment. The papers are all peer reviewed.

### **Background**

This paper was commissioned by the WHO Regional Office for Europe. The case study was produced to inform a resource package for health professionals to be used in multicountry capacity-building events to promote the reorientation of strategies, programmes and activities related to Millennium Development Goals 4 and 5 (child and maternal health) for greater health equity, with an explicit but not exclusive focus on the Roma population.

### **Acknowledgments**

This paper was written by Brankica Mladenovik (Institute of Mother and Child Health, Skopje), Katerina Stavrik (University Children's Hospital, Skopje), and Dragan Tanturovski (University Obstetrics & Gynaecology Clinic), in coordination with Arta Kuli, WHO Country Office, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia. Pilar Campos Esteban (Ministry of Health, Social Services and Equality, Spain) and Daniel La Parra (University of Alicante, Spain) acted as peer reviewers. Piroska Östlin, WHO Regional Office for Europe, had overall responsibility for the development of this paper. Financial support for the development and publication of this case study was provided through the WHO biennial collaborative agreement with the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia 2012–2013.



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# Foreword

*“We want to see better health and well-being for all, as an equal human right. Money does not buy better health. Good policies that promote equity have a better chance. We must tackle the root causes (of ill health and inequities) through a social determinants approach that engages the whole of government and the whole of society.”*

– Dr Margaret Chan, WHO Director-General

Health equity means that all individuals are able to enjoy their highest health potential regardless of their social position or other circumstances determined by social factors.

Inequities in health are increasing in Europe. Power, income, goods and services are unequally distributed in our societies, leading to unequal chances for good health within and between countries across the European Region.

The need for commitment to address these root causes of health inequity was emphasized in a 2008 report by the WHO Commission on Social Determinants of Health (CSDH), the related 2009 World Health Assembly resolution, the Rio Political Declaration on Social Determinants of Health (2011), and the European review of social determinants and the health divide (2012). Improving health for all and reducing health inequities are also among the strategic objectives of Health 2020, the European policy framework for supporting action across government and society for health and well-being.

It is well known that achieving equity is not possible without improving the living conditions of social groups that are experiencing poverty and social exclusionary processes. One of these

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