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Assessment of barriers and opportunities using Gender and Roma lens in North Macedonia: Case of Transport

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Transport Global Practice



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1 Abbreviations

CSOs	Civil Society Organizations
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CoE	Council of Europe
EU	European Union
FGDs	Focus Group Discussions
MDen	North Macedonia Denar
UN	United Nations
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound

2 Acknowledgements

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2. Executive Summary

Building and maintaining roads can have significant economic and social benefits in terms of economic growth and increased access to jobs and to a range of services citizens depend on. However, road infrastructure and transport services are often mistakenly assumed to have uniform benefits for everyone, but they are, in fact, differently experienced by different population groups. For example, women and men often have varying needs for transport infrastructure and services, which stem from their different productive and reproductive roles they hold in a society. At the same time, women and men are not homogenous and they experience transport differently due to their different socio-economic and demographic features, such as, income, age, disabilities, ethnicity and/or location. These multiple identities often lead to multiple and overlapping disadvantages for many, commonly known as ‘intersectionality’¹- influencing access to and use of services and economic opportunities of the multiple identity holders differently. As an example, a Roma woman could face several mobility disadvantages for being women and being a member of a socially excluded group.

This assessment was undertaken as part of the World Bank financed North Macedonia Local Roads Connectivity Project (“the Project”) to explore, for the first time, the less-studied situation of social inclusion in a transport project along gender and ethnicity lines in the country. The assessment (i) identified specific needs of Roma women, Roma men and non-Roma women for road infrastructure and public transport, (ii) explored their needs, experiences and aspirations towards the employment in the sector, and (iii) defined entry points for the Project to address some of these needs. The Roma² are the largest ethnic minority in Europe, as well as one of the most deprived and socially excluded groups. At the same time, women, in general, tend to face different or more acute mobility barriers compared to men. Also, fewer women than men are employed in the transport sector, which is traditionally male dominated. Therefore, it was decided to apply intersectional lens to the analysis to understand mobility and employment barriers that Roma women, Roma men and non-Roma women are facing in order to bring out more nuances of social exclusion and better tailor the solutions to the Project.

The assessment was conducted on a pilot basis in the two municipalities of North Macedonia: Sveti Nikole and Kumanovo. These municipalities were chosen following a brief comparison of all municipalities in North Macedonia in terms of their size, observed openness to consider gender and Roma issues and the existence of civil society organizations (CSOs) working on these topics. Kumanovo is a large urban center, with a municipal public transport system, significant Roma population and active CSOs working on gender and Roma issues. Sveti Nikole is a smaller municipality with a lower percentage of Roma population, dispersed both in the town and in the several villages around it. There is an active women’s movement and a cooperative local government. Since the objective of the analysis was to explore experiences and opinions of Roma and women about their access to and use of transport infrastructure and services and employment opportunities in the sector rather than to confirm or quantify the problem, the team chose qualitative research – focus group discussions and interviews. Stakeholders involved in the study included road construction companies, public transport service providers, Roma men, Roma women and non-Roma women and the representatives of these two municipalities. Findings were complemented by a walking audit and desk research.

¹ Intersectionality is a framework for conceptualizing a person, group of people, or social problem as affected by a number of discriminations and disadvantages. It considers people’s overlapping identities and experiences in order to understand the complexity of prejudices they face.

² The Council of Europe uses the term “Roma” to refer to Roma, Sinti, Kale and related groups in Europe, including Travellers and the Eastern groups (Dom and Lom), and covers the wide diversity of the groups concerned, including persons who identify themselves as Gypsies.

The focus group discussions revealed that Roma communities seem to be disproportionately impacted by inadequate transport infrastructure compared to non-Roma: many of their settlements are illegal, meaning that they are not part of any detailed urban plan, which hinders the possibility for municipal investments. For that reason, for example, in Sveti Nikole, one of the Roma neighborhoods in the town does not have a sewage system postponing plans to asphalt the roads in that community. Whilst this issue falls under the housing and not within the scope of this particular Project, it warrants a dialogue with the government as it affects the ability of this and other similar transport projects in future to deliver infrastructure equitably.

The assessment identified that women and men have different needs and preferences for road infrastructure and transport services. Women tend to rely on public transport more than men. When public transport is unavailable or unaffordable, women often travel by foot concentrating around their households, and their multiple tasks may restrict mobility or add to their travel time. Roma women, especially from rural areas, are the most disadvantaged in terms of access to public transport. Apart from gender differences, perhaps more importantly, the assessment showed that depending on their social standing, ethnic background and geographical location, women use transport modes differently, assess public space safety and make employment decisions differently. In that sense, the study highlighted that women are not a homogenous group and they experience transport differently due to their differences in their socio-economic and demographic features, which calls for tailored interventions to address their varying needs.

The assessment revealed challenges for engaging Roma and women in transport sector jobs, especially in traditionally male-dominated roles, such as a driver, an asphalt paving machine operator or a flagger to direct traffic. Some of the challenges relate to the deeply engraved gender stereotypes that are believed to be one of the most significant barriers to the employment of women in the sector. This refers to the image of the transport sector as male-dominated and not suitable for women or physically strenuous, which can dissuade women from applying for a job or seeking formal training that would prepare them for such jobs. Moreover, perceptions that the employers hold about Roma in general and especially women as being uninterested in any employment will hinder efforts to employ them in this sector. These stereotypes have largely been reinforced by most Roma women themselves who considered the sector unsuitable for them. This was, however, in contrast to the feedback of the male Roma respondents who were open to consider transport sector jobs but saw their lack of networks as the main barrier.

At the same time, the analysis identified some entry points for employing Roma men, Roma women and non-Roma women. Due to migration, transport and road construction companies are facing high staff turnover. Gender and ethnic-based barriers to entry likely further reduce the supply of needed human resources. For example, employing under-represented groups can help these companies meet their staffing shortage for drivers, as the consulted public transport providers pointed out. In this sense, addressing social exclusion and discrimination in the labor market is not only a moral imperative but could be an opportunity to at least partly meet some of the needs for labor. Also, the Project has an opportunity to influence public procurement to raise the number of women employed in upcoming road works. This can follow and further build on another project experience of the World Bank in Albania where the procurement was amended to include a requirement for the contractors to provide gender actions plans where they would demonstrate how they would promote women's employment in their workforce. The country's legislation that supports positive action, e.g. giving priority to the less-represented genders under equal conditions (as a temporary remedy for the effects of prior discrimination until equal representation is achieved) is also aligned with this measure.

Finally, the focus group discussions provided valuable information about the possible ways of organizing stakeholder consultations to allow both men and women, Roma and non-Roma, to

engage more meaningfully. For example, the women's expressed preferences concerning the modes of public consultations are directly linked to the roles they hold in the society and family: some female respondents from urban areas suggested actions that take a smaller toll on their time, as they often juggle employment and family responsibilities: they prefer to participate in consultations through a website, phone, mail, through a short text message or even a door-to-door survey. In rural areas, where women felt the most disempowered to voice concerns, the request was to hold meetings in the villages and not require them to travel to the town. At the same time, Roma men preferred public discussions, town hall meetings and direct debates through the neighborhood units with presence by the mayor and municipal administration.

The findings point to a range of entry points that the Project can undertake. They can be grouped into three buckets: (i) **Employment**, which refers to the activities aimed at improving human resources policies and practices of the Project stakeholders with a view to employ traditionally underreported groups in the sector ii) **Mobility**, which includes a range of activities that the Project can undertake to enhance mobility of these groups through improved road infrastructure and transport services, and (iii) **Voice and Agency**, which aims to encourage a meaningful engagement of Roma and women in the Project as one of the key channels for their inclusion. The latter is about expanding the opportunities of these groups for social participation by enabling them to voice their views and preferences with regards to the way transport infrastructure and services are planned, designed and delivered in their communities and more importantly, transforming these views and preferences into their desired outcomes. The report suggests list of activities that the Project can undertake in Annex I.

3. Introduction

As part of World Bank's Environmental and Social Policy (2017) and the Gender Strategy (2016–2023), the World Bank strives to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in countries where it operates as an important contributor to achieving its twin goals: reducing poverty and promoting shared prosperity. Social inclusion is vital to achieving the twin goals and the principle 'leaving no one behind' of the United Nations (UN) 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. This assessment was developed as part of the preparations of the North Macedonia Local Roads Connectivity Project (the "Project") of the World Bank and the government of North Macedonia to explore, for the first time, the less-studied situation of social exclusion in a transport project along gender and ethnicity lines. It i) identified specific needs that Roma women, Roma men and non-Roma women have for road infrastructure and public transport (ii) explored their needs, experiences and aspirations towards employment in the sector, and (iii) defined entry points to address some of these needs. The Project aims to rehabilitate local roads and municipal streets across all 81 municipalities in the country and support the municipalities in managing their road assets. The analysis was undertaken on a pilot basis in the two municipalities of North Macedonia: Sveti Nikole and Kumanovo.

The analysis stems from the acknowledgement that road infrastructure and transport is differently experienced by different population groups. For example, women and men tend to have different needs and preferences for transport projects, e.g. as to which roads are to be selected for rehabilitation/reconstruction, what the width of pavements and building ramps should be, where traffic lights are most needed or where bus stops should be created. Also, it is not only transport infrastructure that men and women experience differently but its services. Issues where they may have varying priorities relate to availability, affordability and safety of transport, and stem from different productive and reproductive roles that women and men hold in a society. These issues differently impact women's and men's 'mobility' – ability to move around freely and to access jobs, markets and various services, such as, health and education.

For example, women and men use transport differently in terms of purpose, location, time and mode of travel. Their travel generally consists of more frequent trips, often for shorter distances - referred to as 'trip chaining' (i.e. leaving and collecting children at school, accompanying an elderly person to the hospital, going to the market) while men make less frequent and more direct trips, mainly to and from work. As women generally have lower cash incomes and less decision-making control over household financial resources, fewer women than men own and drive private cars, and thus they rely more on public transport. When public transport is unavailable, unreliable and/or unaffordable, women often travel by foot, concentrating around their households, and their multiple tasks may restrict mobility or add to their travel times.

At the same time, women and men do not fit neatly into homogenous groups but are stratified by income, age, disabilities, ethnicity, location and other characteristics. These differences often lead to multiple and overlapping disadvantages for many, commonly known as 'intersectionality' - influencing their access to and use of services and economic opportunities. A Roma woman, for example, could face multiple mobility disadvantages for being women and being a member of a socially excluded group. The Roma³ are the largest ethnic minority in Europe, as well as one of the most socially excluded groups. There are no reliable data on the Roma population in the region. The national census suggests that the share of Roma of the

³ World Bank, *Breaking the Cycle of Roma Exclusion in the Western Balkans*, 2019.
<http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/642861552321695392/pdf/Breaking-the-Cycle-of-Roma-Exclusion-in-the-Western-Balkans.pdf>

total population of North Macedonia (about 2.08 million) is 2.6 percent. There is generally undercounting of Roma in censuses and under-sampling in household surveys. Ethnicity is usually not a topic in nationally representative household surveys and administrative data are not ordinarily disaggregated by ethnicity. Roma sometimes do not self-identify as Roma. The most cited alternative source is that of the Council of Europe (CoE) that suggests that the share of Roma of the total population could be much higher (9.6 percent) than that recorded in the census data (2.6 percent).⁴ The Annex II provides information on legal context related to Roma and Gender Equality in North Macedonia.

According to the last census of 2002, 25 percent of the population in North Macedonia lived in the capital Skopje, 40 percent resided in rural areas, and the remaining - lived in smaller urban centers. Roma do not concentrate in a particular region but are spread across the country. They typically have only limited access to education, economic opportunities, health care, housing and essential services compared to most of the rest of the population, even non-Roma living nearby⁵. They are much less likely to be connected to piped water and sewage and are more likely to⁶ live in substandard housing. Around 70 percent of Roma may not have ownership documents for their homes⁷. Their homes are smaller compared to non-Roma with more than 50 percent of them having a living space of between 2-5 square meter per family member.

With regards to their needs for transport infrastructure and services, not much is available in the literature, but some evidence indicates that they may be facing more and/or different challenges than non-Roma population to access and use public transportation. For example, 35 percent of Roma females and 46 percent of Roma males ages 6–24 surveyed in North Macedonia who are not in school and who have completed compulsory education reported that they are not attending school because of economic factors, namely, the cost of education, such as fees, books and related expenses, such as, transport. Roma across the region report that they are more likely to walk rather than take public transport or use a personal vehicle, which may be hindering their access to jobs and various facilities if this choice of mobility mode is due to lack of financial capacity to afford public transport or a private car, which is likely the case (this could also be due to cultural preferences but this was not ascertained in this analysis).

The experience of the World Bank shows that transport sector employs far fewer women than men in absolute terms and across different roles. Women tend to be over-represented at some levels and occupations, such as administration but very few occupy roles, such as, engineers, equipment operators or managers. In North Macedonia, 12.8 percent of women are employed in transport and storage as compared to 87.2 percent for their male counterparts⁸. The employment data disaggregated by ethnicity and sex is not available for the sector but given the low share of employment of Roma in general, prejudices that the societies hold against their ability to perform in the labor market and the fact that the transport sector is male-dominated, it is expected that the share of Roma and particularly Roma women in the sector is negligible. Whilst it cannot be generalized, the findings of the focus groups indicate this is likely the case.

4 United Nations Development Program (UNDP). *Regional Roma Survey: Quantitative Data Collection of Socio-Economic Position of Marginalized Roma in Western Balkans*. Technical report, 2018

5 World Bank. *Breaking the Cycle of Roma Exclusion in the Western Balkans*, 2019

6 Andrea Spital'szky. *Roma in the Republic of Macedonia: Challenges and Inequalities in Housing, Education and Health*, Roma Democratic Development Association SONCE and Minority Rights Group International. https://minorityrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/MRG_Brief_Mac_ENG_Nov18.pdf

7 The Ministry of Labour and Social Policy. *Strategy for Roma in Macedonia*, 2014-2020.

<http://www.merc.org.mk/Files/Write/Documents/02310/en/Roma-Strategy-in-Macedonia-2014-2020.pdf>

8 State Statistical Office of the Republic of North Macedonia.

With the premise that transport projects do not necessarily bring uniform benefits for everyone, this assessment explored if and what needs and concerns Roma men, Roma women and non-Roma women are having with regards to road infrastructure and transport services, and also, what experiences, expectations and aspirations they hold when it comes to employment in the transport and construction sectors. Whilst the analysis was conducted in two municipalities, the findings are broadly applicable to all municipalities in North Macedonia and the proposed actions can be rolled out by all (or most) other municipalities participating in the Project.

Finally, many road infrastructure and transport systems remain either off-limits or incredibly difficult to use for road users with disabilities, women and men, Roma and non-Roma alike. Issues are various including but not limited to lack of accessibility features for buses and ramps and audible push buttons for street crossing. Mobility constraints are a major obstacle to disability-inclusive development, as they exacerbate the economic, social and personal isolation of persons with disabilities, and tend to push them further into poverty. Albeit to a lesser extent, the walking audit and interviews explored the challenges that people with disabilities face in accessing transport infrastructure and services and made recommendations.

The analysis collected data through desk research, focus group discussions (FGDs) with Roma women, Roma men and non-Roma women in the two municipalities participating in the pilot; interviews with the representatives of these municipalities as well as discussions with road construction and transport companies from eight municipalities. The findings were complemented by a walking audit. Further details on data collection is enclosed in Annex III.

The Project team had not been able to identify any prior study that looked at Gender and Roma issues in transport projects in North Macedonia. It is believed that this analysis is first of its kind produced on this topic in the country. In terms of the study limitations, the analysis primarily focuses on challenges stemming from systemic issues inherent to transport systems, such as, availability, affordability and safety of road infrastructure and transport services. It does not delve deeply into other equally important barriers that women and girls in general and women of ethnic minorities face at individual, household and community levels and that also greatly shape their decisions if, when, where and how to travel, such as, unequal share of unpaid household and care work, gender roles that condition the way women and girls move, or their own aspirations - although the focus groups touched upon some of these issues lightly.

4. Overview of Municipalities

Conclusions and recommendations in this analysis are primarily based on qualitative research undertaken in the two pilot municipalities described below.

4.1. Municipality of Sveti Nikole

Sveti Nikole is a city in the Vardar region of North Macedonia and the seat of municipality of Sveti Nikole. This is a relatively small urban municipality with 17,519⁹ inhabitants, of which 9,048 are men and 8,471 are women, with around 0.39 percent Roma population. However, as reported earlier, the actual Roma figures are likely higher. The majority of inhabitants live in the town, while a smaller number live in the villages, of which 31 are still inhabited. The Roma population is concentrated in the two Roma neighborhoods (Shutka and Rudine) in the town, but Roma are also found in other neighborhoods including in the villages of Erdzelija and Peshirovo. According to the Employment Service Agency of the Republic of North Macedonia,¹⁰ in Sveti Nikole there are 13 unemployed Roma people, 5 of which are women. It is of note that less than 50 percent of Roma (employed, unemployed and out of labor force) are registered with the Employment Service Agency in the country¹¹.

A specific phenomenon in Sveti Nikole is that many of the population that was once Roma now has adopted the ethnic Macedonian or Turkish identity. Many have embraced the Christian Orthodox religion and/or see Turkish identity as a step to upward mobility. This was especially obvious in the rural areas, where many women with Roma heritage declared as Macedonian.

4.2. Municipality of Kumanovo

Kumanovo is a city located in the economically least developed northeast part of North Macedonia and is the seat of the Municipality of Kumanovo, the largest municipality in the country. The population in the urban area numbers 109,573 inhabitants of which 55,199 are men and 54,374 women. The population consists of Macedonians, Albanians, Serbs, Roma, Turks, and others. There is a significant Roma population (5.7 percent of the inhabitants or some 6245 people are confirmed Roma in official statistics). Roma have few organizations, of which the most famous are Roma Community Center DROM, Roma women's organization Daja, and National Roma Centrum. The neighborhoods that are mostly populated by Roma in Kumanovo are Sredorek, Stari Lozja, Baraki, and Bavci. According to the Employment Service Agency, in Kumanovo there are 847 unemployed Roma people, of which 405 are women.

The local government unit developed a Local Action Plan for Roma in the areas of employment, housing, education, health, and Roma woman for 2017–2020, which is very much based on the national action plan. The annual plans pertaining to Roma are based on this local action plan and include specific actions and adequate budgets. Within the topic of employment, the focus is mostly on information sharing regarding employment opportunities for Roma (through the local employment agency) and capacity-building activities against discrimination for potential employers.

⁹ State Statistical Office of the Republic of North Macedonia

¹⁰ Employment Service Agency of the Republic of North Macedonia; data retrieved on 21.12.2019

¹¹ World Bank. *Breaking the Cycle of Roma Exclusion in the Western Balkans*, 2019

5. Key findings of the FGDs with Roma and non-Roma women and Roma men

The Project team conducted eight focus groups with a total of 78 participants. The focus groups consisted of Roma women, non-Roma women and Roma men from the two municipalities. The age of women ranged from 19 to 58 years and of men - from 23 to 65 years. The participants had varied social-economic characteristics: employed, unemployed, retired, and students. The groups were mainly from urban areas although one of the focus groups also engaged 19 Roma and non-Roma women from three villages of Sveti Nikole. The below sections highlight main findings of the discussions gathered in sub-topics. They selectively bring out differing and particularly pertinent viewpoints and do not provide narrative of all groups in all localities.

5.1. Pedestrian and cycling infrastructure

All focus group participants noted that traffic in their localities is chaotic. Women face the challenges mostly as pedestrians and public transport users, while men - as pedestrians and drivers.

“We do not feel like pedestrians but like participants in the traffic because we walk along the main streets all the time”. A male focus group participant, Kumanovo

A majority of women from the focus groups living in urban neighborhoods pointed out that their usual daily routines include moving between home to work, to the shops, stores, and green market as well as the town center. Women also go to the doctor or outpatient clinic and to visit friends and neighbors in suburban neighborhoods. Those who have children take them to kindergarten or school and also go to parks, school playgrounds, and birthday parties and during the weekend visit rural places in the countryside. Men mostly travel to work, to the town center and the market.

Photo 1. Sidewalks overtaken by cars and too narrow and not asphalted, Kumanovo



Photo 2. Sidewalks overtaken by cars and too narrow and not asphalted, Kumanovo



In both municipalities, in the urban locations, distance from their homes to key destinations are close (from 3–4 minutes up to 15–20 minutes walking distance). For example, in Sveti Nikole, the outpatient clinic is about 10–15 minutes by foot, and women can reach the market in about

5–6 minutes, while most of the Roma inhabitants in Kumanovo live close to the center or the nearest suburban neighborhood.

Women in urban areas try to use asphalted roads, whenever available, to reach destinations. Not all urban neighborhoods have asphalted streets, however. Many of the roads are narrow and un-asphalted, which become muddy during rain. Women try to walk along roads that are passable, such as narrower roads, in order to avoid the main streets where there is danger of getting hit by a vehicle, which according to them, happens often. It is of note that about one third of the road casualties are pedestrians in the country¹².

Women also highlighted that pedestrian crossings are often missing, and the existing ones need renewal. Most of the crossings are not marked or the paint has faded and are not safe to cross, and there is no signalization for people with disabilities.

Interestingly, Roma women expressed views that the lack of asphalted roads is the concern mainly in the neighborhoods where majority Roma live while others in which “Macedonians” live have asphalted roads. Most of the Roma participants stated problems with the roads and sewage in their neighborhoods, with frequent floods from the sewers during rain. Some of them also shared concerns related to children’s ability to walk to school. In the Kumanovo neighborhood of Sredorek (Roma neighborhood), lack of the asphalted sidewalks affects children because if it rains when they go to school, they face the danger of being splashed and cannot use school bags with wheels because they are ruined by the inadequate road.

Photo 3. Sredored Roma neighborhood in Kumanovo



¹² World Health Organization (WHO) 2018 *Global Status Report on Road Safety*, 2017.

Photo 4. Women walking in the street - Kumanovo



“If you want to risk your life, you become a cyclist in Kumanovo”. Female focus group participant, Kumanovo.

Being a cyclist is a risky endeavor in Kumanovo, for both women and men. Cars are parked on the sidewalks and bicycle lanes, forcing people to walk in the streets. People in Kumanovo can ride a bike only by the river Quay, but it is a problem to reach the river since the bike lanes are not of sufficient size. Bikers have to use smaller side streets. Focus group participants deemed it difficult to use a bicycle as a means of transport other than recreationally. Bike and car accidents often occur. Children ride bicycles in front of their houses, at the city square, and other areas where there is no traffic.

Photo 5. Roma Neighborhood Bavchi in Kumanovo Close to the city center



Photo 6. Roma Neighborhood Bavchi in Kumanovo close to the city center



Similarly, in Sveti Nikole, both women and men see being a pedestrian and cyclist as challenging. There is no bike lane, and as pedestrians, they feel unsafe and frightened by the carelessness of drivers and the large number of vehicles. As a result, they end up modifying their walking habits: where there are sidewalks, they walk along them, but in many places, these are occupied by parked cars, so they have to find another solution, which is to walk on the road and then climb the sidewalk again. There is a limited number of traffic lights.

Women in rural areas do not have much choice when it comes to walking, as they usually have only one road at their disposal, and it has no sidewalks and is unlit. Poor sidewalks is also a challenging for men but to a lesser extent due to their greater reliance on private transportation. Cars drive fast, making it unsafe for women and children to walk by the roadside, most of the time in mud and unlit conditions, and with the added danger of facing (stray) dogs. The main road in the village is partly asphalted, while smaller roads are earth paths.

Photo 7. Partly asphalted street in village Erdzelija, Sveti Nikole



Photo 8. Partly asphalted street in village Erdzelija, Sveti Nikole



None of the rural Roma women respondents drives a car or a motorbike as opposed to non-Roma. Some ride a bicycle and enjoy cycling, especially when going downhill but going uphill is hard since women usually carry goods from the store. Children ride bicycles in front of the houses or in the school playground, since there is danger of being hit on the main road.

Roma men in both localities choose the closest route for walking except if they are with a child, and then they choose the safest road. They too complain that, as pedestrians, they are forced to walk in the main streets, since all sidewalks are occupied with parked vehicles. In Kumanovo, men noted that green traffic lights are too short to allow crossing as a pedestrian. Men usually walk because it is more convenient than driving and then having to search for a parking lot or space.

Mobility is the biggest challenge for persons with physical disabilities in all localities. The sidewalks are occupied by cars and inaccessible for both people with physical disabilities and parents with children/pushchairs. Most of the public premises do not have access for wheelchairs. There are ramps in some public institutions, such as employment agencies, hospitals and schools. In the central parts of the towns, there are only few locations for people

with physical disabilities such as parks and city squares. The apartment buildings do not have access ramps or elevators for people with physical disabilities. Persons with physical disability are not able to freely and independently move around the town. The situation is especially dire in rural areas where they hardly move due to unsupportive infrastructure. The main street is dangerous as people can get hit by a car, and the side streets are muddy and uneven.

To conclude this section, the FGDs revealed that poor walking and cycling infrastructure is a challenge to all although it seems more so for women than men due to their higher reliance on walking. The challenges seem more exacerbated in the Roma communities where public infrastructure more broadly (e.g. lack of sewage system, asphalted roads) seems to be of poorer quality or non-existent, which is largely due to some of these communities being 'illegal' - meaning that they are built on land not owned by the settlers and without connection to public infrastructure, hence they are not part of any detailed urban plan, which hinders the possibility for municipal investments. As women tend to carry disproportionate household and care burden, one could assume that Roma women in these communities are particularly time-poor carrying uneven burden resulting from poor public infrastructure amenities.

People with physical disabilities and limited mobility (elderly) likely suffer the most. Disability-induced immobility possibly affects women more than men as women have greater reliance on pedestrian infrastructure compared to men who generally have better access to economic resources to alleviate some of their mobility challenges (e.g. driving their car or riding taxi). However, gender-specific disability challenges were not explored in the study. The inadequate state of the pedestrian infrastructure was confirmed by a walking audit that the team took in Roma and non-Roma neighborhoods. See the Annex IV for observations from the audit.

5.2. Public transport availability: routes and bus stops

Kumanovo, being a relatively large urban center, has a public transport system covering the whole municipality, while Sveti Nikole has introduced public transport from the villages to the town. In both municipalities there also exists regulated taxi transport. The buses are mostly used by the pupils, and the high school students as part of the organized municipal school transport. Transport to and from the rural areas of Kumanovo can be limited depending on the distance. In those cases, sometimes people from the rural areas use the school bus in order to get somewhere even though prohibited. For closer destinations the bus frequency is higher, and for farther - the buses run twice a day (for commuting to and from work).

In Kumanovo, women respondents perceived public transport coverage as fairly good. There are bus stops in the center, and while there might be some gaps in terms of the coverage, in general, connections cover their basic needs. However, Roma women pointed out that although transport to Roma neighborhoods exists, it is limited, e.g. the bus to Sredorek passes by the settlement but there is not an actual bus stop. There exist regular lines to other Roma neighborhoods until 6 pm which run once in every hour. Roma women consider buses uncomfortable because they are old although consider hygiene in buses broadly acceptable.

Roma men in Kumanovo also noted that in some Roma neighborhoods (Stari Lozja, for example), there is no bus line, and taxi drivers refuse to pick up passengers from there because it is uphill, and the road is in a bad condition. They noted that the quality of buses usually depends on a service provider company; some companies operate fewer lines and work better

(e.g. buses number 5, 8, 3). Others are irregular: for example, the buses with number 4 or 8 run to street Oktomvriska revolucija, but they take longer (although the cost is less, at MDen¹³ 30).

Photo 9. Public Transport in Kumanovo



In terms of the road safety, private transport, especially the one provided by unlicensed carriers is not considered safe by women. These operators pick up passengers just before the public transport vehicles; they do not pay taxes and if an accident occurs during the trip, they are not held accountable. Those passenger carriers that have a registered company are safer although the respondents noted that there is one registered company that uses old passenger vans and stops to collect passengers at locations that are not designated stops.

In terms of theft and sexual harassment in the buses in urban areas, experiences differ by the respondents, but it seems that female students and older people are at a higher risk of sexual harassment and theft, respectively, than others. This observation concerns all respondents interviewed. There were no specific personal safety concerns raised by Roma in this regard.

Interestingly, rural women feel safer in a taxi (both legal and illegal) as the drivers are local and they know them. Their main complaint with busses is that there are no designated bus stops (that is, they stop at the discretion of the driver) and people wait in the middle of the village or on the main road, usually lifting a hand to signal for a ride. Kumanovo men shared similar views about illegal taxis to those of rural women. They see taxis as a safe mode of transport, as they know the taxi drivers, and people that ride together also usually know each other.

In summary, it transpires that in urban areas non-Roma respondents perceive public transport coverage as fairly good although there are some gaps reported in some places. Roma women and Roma men brought up more and different concerns about bus and taxi coverage and services, e.g. lack of a bus stop, big intervals between the service and/or service stop running after certain times in their communities. Some of these challenges could be due to the location and road conditions in Roma communities (e.g. taxi drivers refusing to serve Roma customers because the drivers are concerned poor road conditions in these communities will ruin their

¹³ North Macedonia Denar (MDen)

cars) and not due to deliberate discrimination-fueled decisions to ignore Roma-populated areas although this is something that could not be ascertained in the focus group discussions.

5.3. Public transport regularity and costs

In Kumanovo the bus ticket costs MDen 20; women use the bus occasionally and do not find it overly expensive. Except for the bus number 1, which offers monthly passes, passengers are charged for each ride on all other lines, as different lines are operated by different companies. Women in Sveti Nikole do not find bus fares very high either (MDen 40 one way from Mustafino, MDen 30 from Erdzelija and Amzabegovo) as the fares are subsidized by the local government to the transport operators. Public transport from the rural areas to Sveti Nikole was introduced recently as a result of the lobbying and advocacy efforts of local women CSOs.

In terms of the bus fares vis-à-vis that of a taxi, a bus ticket is cheaper than the taxi fare, but taxi allows for more flexibility in planning daily routes. When people use taxi that charges fares by time and when they travel in a group of more than two people, taxi becomes affordable.

Both men and women, Roma and non-Roma alike, adapt their mobility depending on transport fares and times. For some destinations, they walk one way and use a taxi on the other. Sharing a taxi is also a preferred option as well as riding an unlicensed taxi, which costs the same as bus fare if shared with others.

Generally speaking, people consider transport timetables inadequate to meet their needs. All women shared concerns that there are no public displays of the bus routes and time. This is especially true for rural places where there is no regular public transport.

The FGDs could not ascertain particular gender or ethnic-specific concerns with regards to affordability for transport, rather the differences are socio-economic. Consulted women (both Roma and non-Roma) come from various social backgrounds and voiced different views on the prices. This could in part be due to the selection of the municipalities (at least for Sveti Nikole, key destinations are in walking distance). Generally speaking, global experience shows that women are more affected by the transport systems that charge flat rates per line or per journey and that do not offer integrated ticketing systems. This is because since women travel multiple destinations within one trip, they have to pay numerous single fare tickets during a chained trip. Apart from one route in Kumanovo, transport providers do not offer integrated ticketing systems, which is likely affecting women more than men in terms of costs. As for Roma (both women and men), other studies¹⁴ report transport costs as one of the reasons for unmet needs for basic services, such as, education. Regularity of transport service concerns all but more so women due to their multiple trips and greater reliance on public transport. In FGDs all women shared pronounced concerns about the regularity of public transport and lack of timetables.

5.4. Safety in public space

The perceptions of safety in public space between non-Roma and Roma women differ markedly. Non-Roma women in both Kumanovo and Sveti Nikole generally feel much safer than Roma women in public spaces, especially in the urban area of Sveti Nikole. However, there are exceptions, when women feel unsafe in certain areas, such as surroundings of the center for drug users in Kumanovo, which is located in close proximity with a kindergarten.

Roma women in both localities noted that they and their children feel in danger in the streets and they gave reasons such as, fear of people with mental health issues and stray dogs. In Divo Naselje neighborhood, speed bumps and traffic signs have been removed, and there is no lighting in the Karposh and Rajkova Kukja neighborhoods as well as in Banevo Trlo.

¹⁴ World Bank, *Breaking the Cycle of Roma Exclusion in the Western Balkans*, 2019.

Roma women also reported that they face verbal harassment by drivers from their cars, as do girls when they walk.

Public lighting is an issue raised by all women, in general.

Rural women also assess the public spaces as generally safe, but they do point out the same issues that impact their view of safety, such as the domestic dogs that are let loose to wander by themselves as well as the smaller streets not being lit. It is notable that there is a lack of arranged public spaces where women (or men) can come together in the rural areas.

The marked differences in the perception of safety in public spaces between Roma and non-Roma women is a cause of concern and calls for the attention by the Project when designing public infrastructure investments. Due to the format of the FGDs, reasons for these differences were not explored in depth but the concerns shared in FGDs point to a number of directions: (i) Roma women feel unsafe compared to non-Roma due to dilapidated infrastructure in their communities (e.g. lack of street lighting or roads with potholes affect their perceived and real risks of safety), (ii), Roma women and girls face verbal harassment from road users for being Roma, as they noted, and (iii) the discrimination and harassment that they have historically been experiencing in a public domain makes them unsafe when they venture in public space.

5.5. Public transport to access employment and health and education facilities

Roma across all countries in the Western Balkans report that they are more likely to walk rather than take public transport or a personal vehicle, which may be affecting their ability to access markets and job opportunities.¹⁵ As reported earlier, about 35 percent of Roma females and 46 percent of Roma males ages 6–24 surveyed in North Macedonia who are not in school and who have completed compulsory education report that they are not attending school because of economic factors, namely, the cost of education or related expenses, such as transport. Transport emerges as one of the potential barriers that could be affecting the human capital accumulation of Roma (both females and males) differently compared to non-Roma.

Interestingly, there is also a difference in the assessment of public transport access to income-generating opportunities between Roma and non-Roma women. Non-Roma women pointed out that the existing transport system generally allows them to get to the desired facilities, albeit offering a limited choice (limited bus lines) and sometimes being quite unreliable (no timetables). Roma women seem to be more affected and see a more direct link between transport and job attainment. For example, one of the rural women was offered a job in a factory in Sveti Nikole and did not accept since she would have to stand in the van during the whole half an hour trip as the van usually takes more people than seats are available for.

In general, large companies and factories often provide their own transport for the employees, with agreed stops in towns and in some villages, depending on the number of workers. This can pose additional challenge for women from rural areas who need to reach towns or other locations where the factory buses pass. Experiences of women varied in that regard; one woman took up seasonal farm work with organized transport to get to the destination, yet another one shared the experience of working in the neighboring municipality of Shtip, but in the passenger van organized by the company there were twice as many people as there were supposed to be

¹⁵ World Bank, *Breaking the Cycle of Roma Exclusion in the Western Balkans*, 2019

and for that reason she stopped working. When companies do not offer such service, women have to organize themselves to share transport.

The FGD participants were of an opinion that the roads were not an employment obstacle per se but rather the availability, quality and cost of transportation. Rural women were especially vocal in this regard, stating that they cannot get to the desired health and education facilities because public transport runs only twice a week. This is important feedback for the Project to consider in the design of one of its subcomponents concerning public transport.

5.6. Participation in planning and decision-making regarding transport projects

Regarding the participation in the planning and decision-making processes for previous road projects, different groups had participated or heard consultations to different degree. For example, non-Roma women in Kumanovo stated that they had been informed of processes by phone, during the campaign of the Kumanovo mayor, and have been invited to attend a gathering. Also, recently there was a phone poll organized by the municipality asking the citizens about the current state of affairs and the needs and changes that should be made in traffic and city transport. Based on the poll, the city planned to regulate public transport and traffic. In terms of the actual decision related to roads works, women stated that they are not involved in the process. Sometimes the decision is made via the neighborhood units.

“We as women cannot decide, there are engineers and professionals and the decisions should be made through a public debate.” A woman focus group participant, Kumanovo

Roma women in Kumanovo have not been involved at all in the decision-making process for road selection or design. They reported that they usually find out about the road works once works begins. They have a feeling they are left on their own to resolve issues and negotiate between neighbors, such as last year, when the tenants from the Bajram Shabani street to the back of the building paid 80 euros each because the asphalt and the sewer were left unfinished. In another case, in one

neighborhood where there is a need to widen the street, people refuse to give a part of their yard and as a result, street is not built, because the municipality would not get involved.

In Sveti Nikole, non-Roma women had not participated in road infrastructure planning events either but expressed a wish to do so. Roma women have attended a discussion about the roads in the municipality since the topic was related to the renovation of a particular street that concerned them. A decision was adopted to pave the street with sand, but not asphalt because there is no sewage system which would need to be provided first before asphaltting the roads. Roma women in Sveti Nikole noted that if there is a need to attend such meetings, they will participate, but they do not have a great desire to do so.

As for rural women, they perhaps feel the most disempowered and believe they should not be the ones influencing planning and decision-making for the municipal budget. Discouragement is also due to unresolved undertakings by the municipality, such as in the previous year when some construction began and was left unfinished or the promises from the past three years about constructing the main road in the village were not fulfilled. They noted that they are approached only before elections.

Male respondents from Roma communities in both municipalities have not been consulted on any issue related to road works either and they usually become aware of road works when they begin. Men noted that once in Kumanovo a petition was signed for construction of a road, but

it was ignored by the municipality. In Sveti Nikole a debate which roads to choose took place five to six years ago, but there was no concrete outcome as a result.

Respondents shared their willingness to participate in public consultations in future and provided interesting suggestions as to how feedback can be provided. Only urban women in Sveti Nikole stated that they could participate in public debates. They also suggested that the citizens should be able to put a note about their problems at some public places and someone in the municipality would review those suggestions. The access to information should be more transparent and more available to the citizens. In rural areas the request was made by women to hold meetings in the villages and not require travel to Sveti Nikole. For example, they could be organized in schools, it was suggested. Representatives of different sectors in the municipality should be present in order to directly hear needs. Roma men generally preferred direct debates, public discussions, town hall meetings, and debates through the neighborhood units with presence by the mayor and municipal administration.

As it transpired from the FGDs, all the respondents regardless of gender and ethnicity shared concerns about not being included in the consultations concerning public infrastructure projects in their communities. However, their views differed with regards to their aspirations to be consulted and the preferred modes of consultations.

5.7. Recommendations made by the focus group participants

Below are specific suggestions made by the focus group participants with regards to road infrastructure and transport services.

Table 1. Participant proposals for improved transport infrastructure and services

Kumanovo	Sveti Nikole
Establish regular public transport line during the weekends.	Asphalt the streets that have not been asphalted, including muddy side streets in the villages.
Set up more bus stops (for example, in the Karposh neighbourhood).	Free sidewalks from parked cars.
Improve street lighting in suburban areas.	Regularly repair the potholes.
Have public transport available every 15–20 minutes, covering the entire town including all neighbourhoods.	Regularly mark the streets and the pedestrian crossings.
Have well-constructed and continuous sidewalks on both sides of streets	Asphalt roads to Roma settlements
Improve cleaning of the streets, especially in winter.	Widen some streets and build sidewalks
Mark roads better (for example, the road at the exit from Kumanovo that goes to Sveti Nikole has no marked lines and it is unsafe for driving).	Improve school transport in the villages.
Install traffic lights.	Asphalt the road from the overpass to the village of Erdzelija.
Address the issue of stray dogs.	Set up bus stops in the villages.
Refresh pedestrian crossings.	Reconstruct the bridge and construct the road to the cemetery in Mustafino.

Remove cars from sidewalks and bicycle lanes.	Create cadaster to outline the streets between the fields in Mustafino (since some are overploughed and as a result narrowed).
Create more bicycle lanes and provide better coverage	In Amzabegovo rehabilitate the road in front of the post office because there is a big pond.
	Asphalt streets and the road to the church in Amzabegovo.
	In Erdzelija, asphalt the roads and put up street lighting.
	Place traffic lights where appropriate.
	Place signposts at some major crossroads.
	Place speed bumps.
	Pave walking trails and make the park a pedestrian zone.
	Mark bicycle lanes
	Asphalt the non-asphalted road in Rudino neighbourhood and build sewage.

6. Employment of Roma and non-Roma men and women in the transport sector.

Addressing social exclusion in the labor market is not only a moral imperative but it also implies unexplored economic opportunities and forgone fiscal gains¹⁶. Low employment rates, high informality and low wages among women and Roma could result in lower fiscal revenues. Also, an aging population and a long tradition of emigration pose challenges to productivity. The projected population growth is nearly zero, and estimates based on census data suggest that more than 500,000 citizens reside abroad, one of the largest diasporas in the world as a percentage of the total population¹⁷. Considering the small size of the workforce and low birth rates, the loss of even a small number of workers affects the overall pool of skills in the economy. Migration took its toll on transport and construction sectors as reflected in the lack of human capital for many roles in these two sectors. Addressing social exclusion of Roma in the labor market could thus be an opportunity to alleviate at least some of the needs for labor.

In North Macedonia, as few as 30 percent of Roma women in the 15–64 age category participate in the labor force, as compared to 56 percent of Roma men, a 26 percent gender gap¹⁸. Albeit slightly lower, the gender gap in labor force participation is also very high for the non-Roma population at 24 percent (36 percent for women and 60 percent for men). This indicates that both Roma and non-Roma women experience challenges in the labor market while Roma women likely face intersecting barriers. Women tend to be overrepresented at some levels and occupations in the labor market in North Macedonia, such as public administration, education and health care, but they occupy hardly any roles in the transport and construction sectors: 12.8 percent of women are employed in transport and storage in North Macedonia, as compared to 87.2 percent for their males, and 6.6 percent of females are engaged in construction¹⁹, compared to 93.4 percent for males.²⁰ The employment data disaggregated by ethnicity is not available for the sectors, but this assessment confirms the assumptions that the share of Roma and particularly Roma women in the sector is almost nonexistent.

6.1. Attitudes, perceptions and needs for employment in the sector

In terms of employment in the road construction and transport sector, women in FGDs were quite reserved. This field of work was perceived as appropriate only for men. Non-Roma women were more open to taking such work, depending on the specific job, especially if it offers a better salary or employment conditions than other positions existing in the labor market. At the same time, some women stated that they are capable, and can succeed in whatever they undertake including in these sectors.

Roma women (especially from Kumanovo) were much more reserved about the idea than those in Sveti Nikole, with a small number saying it would depend on the type of employment. Women highlighted that there are only male taxi drivers and that only men work in construction. Women would not take up, for example, a job of a road surface marker. Barriers to taking up jobs in this sector illustrate a Roma perspective that perceives this type of

¹⁶ World Bank. *Breaking the Cycle of Roma Exclusion in the Western Balkans*, 2019

¹⁷ World Bank. *North Macedonia: Local Roads Connectivity Project*

<http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/503231576983635435/North-Macedonia-Local-Roads-Connectivity-Project>

¹⁸ World Bank. *Roma Brief Regional Roma Survey*, Key Indicators 2017

<http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/372571554413509160/pdf/Regional-Roma-Survey-Briefs.pdf> - last accessed March 15, 2020

¹⁹ Construction here bundles many activities such as construction of buildings, civil engineering and specialized construction activities.

<https://ilostat.ilo.org/resources/methods/classification-economic-activities/>

²⁰ State Statistical Office of the Republic of North Macedonia. *Women and Men in North Macedonia 2019*. 2017 figures

employment adequate for men, shameful for women and their families, especially the husbands, and also unsafe. Women respondents in Sveti Nikole were more open to it. In fact, one of the Roma women in Sveti Nikole used to work on the highway, placing road safety barriers. She would do that again and she does not mind that the job requires physical work. If there is an option to obtain a job in that sector, Roma women from Sveti Nikole would accept it, even though women there mostly work in commerce or in the textile factories.

Rural women also had divided opinions. Some would be interested in taking up jobs in this sector, other would not. Older women said that they would be interested in any job. Women see these jobs as hard and would rather work in a textile factory or stay at home than work on the road. They do not see it as shameful but rather as offering inadequate conditions. Like the majority of urban women, they are not motivated to work directly on the road but would take jobs in administration. They have not considered this yet since they believe they do not have adequate education. They stated they can work in toll stations and see that as a woman's job.

On the contrary, Roma men were open to employment opportunities but believe that jobs in this field are provided based on a political party affiliation. They reported to have never seen such job postings. According to them, those who are capable of work need to be encouraged by someone and have regular meetings so that they would be informed of the opportunities.

7. Interviews with the municipality representatives

The assessment also included semi-structured interviews with key informants from the two municipalities to identify their opinions about the mobility challenges faced by the residents in general and particularly by certain population groups, and to also gauge their views about the opportunities to employ women in transport and construction sector jobs. The interviewees included various roles such as Equal Opportunities and Roma coordinators, Manager of Sector for Communal affairs, Environmental Protection and Traffic, and the Mayor (in the case of Sveti Nikole). This section summarizes key points shared by them during the interviews.

Obligations with regards to public transport of the two municipalities are quite different. Kumanovo as a bigger city has an obligation to organize municipal transport, while Sveti Nikole introduced it last year upon request of women from villages surrounding the town. Kumanovo's public transport consists of 24 lines covered by buses and vans. The buses drive within the city while the vans are utilized for lines that do not have large numbers of passengers, usually toward the rural areas. The last bus usually finishes at 22:00. Lines and bus stop setting are allocated to different transport companies following public bids. The municipality also issues taxi licenses for local taxi transport. Sveti Nikole has introduced three transport routes covering seven villages, which are operated by a private transport company subsidized by the municipality. The minibuses are mostly used by women (including Roma) also because they have been introduced resulting, from local women CSOs' advocacy actions. They run twice per day, twice a week (Wednesday and Saturday). The process of setting up bus stops in the villages has started. There is no public transport within the town except taxi drivers, as it is considered a small place and any location can be reached on foot in 15–20 minutes.

Both municipalities consider current transport systems as safe and believe they satisfy users' basic needs and are planning for improvement. Kumanovo, as part of the Smart City Project, is planning on introducing a mobile phone application that will provide information for all transport lines, while Sveti Nikole has announced a tender for the design of a traffic project for the city of Sveti Nikole that will determine traffic needs of the citizens.

The biggest challenge posed to public transport in both municipalities comes from the illegal taxi drivers. Their numbers are decreasing, although they still significantly disrupt the formal transport system.

Decisions to introduce changes in transport and road construction are made by the Municipal Council based on needs of the community as identified by the Department for Communal Affairs or other municipal bodies and administrations or through the neighborhood units. Streets in central parts of the towns, which are usually most frequented, are regularly maintained for the most part, while other areas depend on the less regular availability of funding. In this context, Roma neighborhoods that are in the city centers or in close proximity are better off. Those in the suburbs and in the villages share bigger challenges in terms of transport access and basic road infrastructure.

An issue that additionally makes the situation difficult is the fact that many of the Roma settlements are illegal, not part of any detailed urban plan, which hinders the possibility for municipal investment and intervention. In Sveti Nikole, one of the Roma neighborhoods (Rudine) in the town does not have a sewage system, postponing plans for asphaltting the roads in the community. In 2019 Kumanovo, started the procedure for developing a plan for an urban

mobility project. Municipal officials are univocal in stating that they do not differentiate between the ethnicity of citizens when making decisions regarding infrastructure interventions.

As do all other participants of this assessment, municipal staff and officials in both municipalities confirm that the local infrastructure is not adapted to the needs of persons with disabilities. There exists some infrastructure. There are access ramps to some institutions and schools. Kumanovo has a number of sidewalks that are adapted for people with physical disabilities, and the public library has installed elevator to assist people with disabilities. But in general, municipalities confirm that they need infrastructure investment, such as for parking spaces, bicycle lanes, sewage, and drainage—for which the municipal budget is not enough.

Representatives of both municipalities were skeptical about Roma women being interested in any jobs and especially in transport and road construction roles. They doubted that companies in these sectors would be open to hiring women, especially Roma, as they see these sectors suitable only for men and too labor intensive for women. They may be involved in lighter aspects such as road sign-making and signaling, it was noted. This resonates with other findings in the literature that explain large gender gaps among Roma partly by the cultural bias and stereotyping by employers towards Roma women²¹²².

²¹ Council of Europe; *Roma and Travellers: Gender Equality* <https://www.coe.int/en/web/roma-and-travellers/gender-equality>

²² Breaking the Cycle of Roma Exclusion in the Western Balkans” World Bank, 2019.

8. Focus group discussions with contractors and public transport companies

Finally, the Project team held discussions with transport companies providing public transport from five different municipalities, and road construction companies - from eight different municipalities to identify their views on the current state of road infrastructure and public transport service in general and their accessibility for different population groups, and to also gauge their views and attitudes towards employing Roma men, Roma women and non-Roma women in their respective workforce in transport and road construction related roles.

The representatives of both transport and construction companies assess the quality of the streets in the country as bad, while local roads are in somewhat better condition. The majority of the representatives of the construction companies agreed that conditions are extremely dire in the Roma neighborhoods. In towns like Tetovo (including the rural areas) and Prilep, the situation is quite grave, and in Bitola the Roma community is living on the regional road to Ohrid, which poses a major threat for both Roma inhabitants and by-passers.

Most of the contractors are not involved in the road design. Some occasional consultation does occur with the transport companies, mainly during implementation and when deciding details such as the location and design of the bus stops. Usually, the planning of the transport route is undertaken by the municipal traffic departments and engineers and the planning for the new streets and roads is developed in line with the detailed urban plans of the municipalities, and specific street and road interventions are planned by the municipal urban planning department.

“Usually [we are involved] not in planning, because inspectors are locally involved, but then if we see that something is missing, or we have a suggestion or a better idea it is accepted. It is usually after the proposal has been made and implemented.” Transport company representative

In some municipalities, transport companies with bigger transport fleets are invited for consultations; in others they have the opportunity to react only once the municipality has published the calls for services or even after the work has been assigned to contractors.

Constructions companies are almost never involved in the planning process, as they find out about plans for reconstruction of roads and/or construction of new ones only after the public calls (tenders) are announced, and they feel this should be changed.

Municipalities with 100,000 citizens and more are mandated by law²³ to organize intra-municipal transport. Others with inhabitants below this number are free to decide whether to introduce it or not. Intermunicipal transport is organized through the Ministry of Transport based on agreements between the municipalities such as, for example Bitola, with neighboring Mogila, and Novaci municipalities or Tetovo with neighboring Bogovinje, Tearce, Brvenica, and Jegunovce.

Transport lines (including bus stop locations) are determined by the local governments and assigned through public calls. Fares can be either left open for contractors to propose or some municipalities announce a tariff plan in the bids.

²³ Law on transport in passenger traffic, Official Gazette of RM, no. 68/2004, 127/2006, 114/2009, 83/10, 140/10, 17/11, 53/11, 6/12, 23/13, 120/13, 163/13, 187/13, 42/14, 112/14, 166/14, 97/15, 124/15, 129/15, 193/15, 37/16, 71/16 and 64/18

“When the process gets to us, it is already final, we have no room for planning intervention.”

Construction company
representative

Challenges faced by transport companies relate to the allocation of transport routes and rate of fares. Usually municipalities determine fares, which are not necessarily based on market price, making it difficult for companies to find enough economic interest to apply for transport routes. Route allocation is also very economically charged, as some companies that manage

to obtain contracts for several routes focus their efforts on the most profitable ones and not servicing those that are less so. Transport and construction companies alike point out that bus stops in the urban areas are well maintained, while in rural areas they sometimes do not exist. However, there is a generally understood spot where the transport (bus or minibus) stops. A common problem is posed by cars parked in front of bus stops interrupting traffic and not allowing passengers to access.

“The Municipality of Bogovinje, with over 30,000 inhabitants, has over 200 unregistered vans for transportation. What can you plan for when there is a large volume of illegal taxi drivers? We have carriers in other municipalities working illegally, and some work illegally in international lines.

There are many things to change to keep up with other problems. The easiest thing right now is to switch from legal to illegal carrier.” Transport
company representative

The biggest problem transport companies face is the illegal transport providers. The impression is that their numbers are increasing, hindering transport companies’ plans for growth. Citizens use them because the fares are the same and routes - more convenient, as they bring riders directly to as close as possible to their destinations compared to regular legal transportation, which has to use determined routes and stops. At the same time, official transport

companies lack systems for passenger satisfaction evaluation, including views on safety.

“That’s why we say they should consult us, because we as implementers know what materials to use, which have better quality, and so on. We know the materials, but there is no interest from municipalities or institutions to ask us for new road construction materials.”

Construction company
representative

Construction companies, on the other hand, mostly shared concerns about the quality of the projects and project designs, according to which the public bids and specifications are developed; they also disapprove municipalities’ desire to sometimes resolve road issues with insufficient money. Inaccurate technical specifications cause unforeseen things to happen on the ground and prices can rise above 30 percent of the projected design, causing payment problems. Additionally, due to lack of a cadaster of underground infrastructure, sometimes the builders inadvertently cause damage to the fiber optic cable from different operators and sometimes the proceedings go to court, and contractors have to pay for the damage. Consulting

companies believe that municipalities and citizens would benefit from local governments being more open to and knowledgeable about new materials and approaches in construction.

Both the contractors and the transport companies agreed that persons with disabilities have least access, if any, to public spaces and transport means. Some of the transport companies have vehicles with ramps, but the help is insignificant as bus stops are not suitable. Usually,

general infrastructure conditions are so bad that people with disabilities rarely go out on their own; when they do go out, they need assistance to board the vehicles.

Disability access is being considered more in new projects, but in existing roads and both public and private facilities there are no access ramps.

“If it fits to the job, we don't divide people if it's Roma or non-Roma. Especially now there is a shortage of workers.” Transport company representative

Migration has taken its toll on both economic sectors, reflected in the lack of human capital for all job positions. As a result, companies are more open to considering employment of women in these sectors, even though there has been some obvious and stated resistance, especially from the construction companies consulted. Transport companies are more open to the

idea of employing women, even Roma women, as they are facing a shortage of workers.

“In my opinion as a woman, I think it is up to the mentality. In a family, for example, if a woman wants to drive a bus, I think there will be a reaction from the family.” Transport company

During the discussions, some unsupportive statements were provided regarding the employment opportunities for Roma men and Roma women. Women generally are employed in the two sectors in administration or as technical staff (engineers). The overarching opinion is that these are nontypical professions for women as well as labor intensive and women are not interested in working in these sectors. Participants also stated that

female drivers would face discrimination in the workplace as well as prejudice from the society, since such work is still considered socially unacceptable for women. None of these stakeholders employ Roma women. The construction companies interviewed had particular difficulty seeing opportunities for Roma women in the sector, apart from cleaning positions.

9. Conclusions and Next Steps

The analysis identified that women and men have different needs and preferences for transport and road infrastructure and services. Poor walking and cycling infrastructure is a challenge to all although it is more so for women than men due to their heavier reliance on walking. The challenges seem more exacerbated in the Roma communities where public infrastructure seems to be of poorer quality, which is largely due to some of these communities being ‘illegal’ - meaning that they are built on land not owned by the settlers and without connection to public infrastructure, hence they are not part of any detailed urban plan, which hinders the possibility for municipal investments. As women tend to carry disproportionate household and care burden, one must assume that Roma women in these communities are particularly time-poor carrying unequal burden as a result of poor public infrastructure amenities. Also, people with physical disabilities or limited mobility (e.g. elderly) likely suffer the most - as was revealed in focus group discussions and interviews and as was confirmed during the walking audit.

Women more than men rely on public transport. When public transport is unavailable, unreliable or unaffordable, they often travel by foot concentrating around their households, and their multiple tasks may restrict mobility or add to their travel time. In urban areas, non-Roma respondents perceive public transport coverage as fairly good although they reported some gaps in some areas. Roma men and women shared more concerns with regards to the availability of public transport in their neighborhoods, e.g. they reported lack of a bus stop, big intervals between the service, bus service stopping operation in the evening and taxis not bringing customers to their destination. Some of these challenges may be due to poorer road conditions (e.g. uphill roads with potholes could damage taxi, as reported) and not necessarily due to deliberately discriminating Roma-populated areas although this is something that could not be ascertained through FGDs. The above-reported illegality of settlements could be affecting decisions not only about road infrastructure but public transport service (e.g. allocation of routes). Whilst this topic of informal settlements falls more under the housing and not within the scope of this particular Project, it warrants a dialogue with the government as it affects the ability of this and other similar transport projects in future to deliver infrastructure equitably.

Interestingly, it was not always easy to draw significant delineation between the experiences of Roma and non-Roma women, as their challenges also stem from their social positioning, ethnicity and geographical location (rural/urban). Depending on these characteristics, women use transport modes, assess public space safety and make employment decisions differently. For example, fear of safety in urban public space has been the most acutely pronounced among Roma women compared to any other groups. At the same time, rural women (both Roma and non-Roma) shared similar concerns about the lack of pedestrian infrastructure and public transport in their rural communities. In that sense, the study highlighted that women are indeed not a homogenous group and they experience transport differently due to their differences in their socio-economic and demographic features, which again underlines the importance of nuanced understanding of their varying needs in order to have tailored interventions.

The assessment revealed challenges for engaging Roma and women in transport sector jobs, especially in traditionally male-dominated roles, such as a driver, an asphalt paving machine operator or a flagger to direct traffic. Some of these challenges relate to the deeply engraved gender stereotypes that are believed to be one of the most significant barriers to the employment of women in the sector. This refers to the image of the transport sector as male-dominated and not suitable for women or physically strenuous, which can dissuade women from applying for a job or seeking formal training that would prepare them for such jobs. The perceptions that the employers hold about Roma in general and especially women as being uninterested in any

employment will deter efforts to employ them in this sector. These stereotypes have largely been reinforced by most Roma women themselves who considered the sector unsuitable for them. This was, however, in contrast to the feedback of the male Roma respondents who were open to consider transport sector jobs but saw their lack of networks as the main barrier.

At the same time, the assessment identified a number of entry points for employing Roma (women and men) and non-Roma women. For example, due to migration, transport and road construction companies are facing high staff turnover. Gender and ethnic-based barriers to entry likely further reduce the supply of needed human resources. Employing under-represented groups can help these companies meet their staffing shortage for drivers, for example, as the consulted public transport providers pointed out themselves. In this sense, addressing social exclusion and discrimination in the labor market is not only a moral imperative but could be an opportunity to at least partly meet some of the needs for labor.

Finally, the focus group discussions provided valuable information about the possible ways of organizing stakeholder consultations to allow both men and women to engage more meaningfully. For example, the women's expressed preferences as to the modes of public consultations are directly linked to the roles they hold in the society and family: some female respondents from urban areas suggested actions that take a smaller toll on their time, as they often juggle employment and family responsibilities: they prefer to participate in consultations through a website, phone, mail, through a text message, or even a door-to-door survey. In rural areas, where women felt the most disempowered to voice concerns, the request was to hold meetings in the villages and not require them to travel to the town. At the same time, Roma men preferred public discussions, town hall meetings and direct debates through the neighborhood units with presence by the mayor and municipal administration.

The findings point to a range of entry points that the Project can undertake. They can be grouped into the three buckets: (i) **Employment**, which refers to the activities aimed at improving human resources policies and practices of the Project stakeholders with a view to employ traditionally underreported groups in the sector ii) **Mobility**, which includes a range of activities that the Project can undertake to enhance mobility of these groups through improved road and transport infrastructure and services, and (iii) **Voice and Agency**, which aims to encourage a meaningful engagement of Roma and women in the Project as one of the key channels for their inclusion. The latter is about expanding the opportunities of these groups for social participation by enabling them to voice their views and preferences with regards to the way transport and road infrastructure and services are planned, designed and delivered in their communities and more importantly, transforming these views into their desired outcomes.

This report identifies **two concrete platforms** through which these activities can be implemented: (i) "Community-driven infrastructure pilot", one of the subcomponents of the Project. Under this subcomponent, the Project will provide grants to the selected municipalities to support priority investments identified by the communities to enhance their mobility and road safety. The action plans will propose solutions in relation to public transport services, active mobility, resilience, security, and safety. The interested municipalities will be asked to respond to the call for proposals. The Annex I proposes tentative eligibility criteria for the grant that incorporates Roma and Gender-specific mobility and employment targets which the municipalities will be requested to incorporate, and (ii) public procurement. The Project can influence public procurement to raise the number of Roma (women and men) and non-Roma women employed in upcoming road works. This can follow and further build on another project experience of the World Bank in Albania where the procurement was amended to include a requirement for the contractors to provide gender actions plans where they would demonstrate

how they would go about promoting women's employment in their workforce. Furthermore, bidding documents can be amended to also include Roma and gender-specific numerical targets for employment. The country's legislation that supports positive action, e.g. giving priority to the less-represented genders under equal conditions (as a temporary remedy for the effects of prior discrimination until equal representation is achieved) is also aligned with this measure.

Annex I: Community-Driven Infrastructure pilot

1. Background

This subcomponent will provide grants (through the North Macedonia Local Roads Connectivity Project) to selected municipalities of North Macedonia to pilot priority investments identified by the municipalities to enhance their mobility and road safety. Plans will identify solutions for the community's broader mobility needs in relation to public transport services, active mobility, resilience and safety. They may include specific measures to improve mobility, such as sidewalks, bike paths, supplementary street lighting, bus shelters, junction improvement, road calming, and/or pedestrian crossings; to improve climate resilience such as slope stabilization and spot drainage works; and for improved public transportation and school bus services. Municipalities selected to participate in the pilot will have a demonstrated need for, and commitment to, community-driven projects that serve the needs of vulnerable groups, such as Roma, people with disabilities, people with limited mobility (e.g. elderly, pregnant women) and women who may not necessarily be vulnerable but who are underrepresented in the transport sector workforce. Responding to the Call for proposals, the municipalities will clearly articulate how they will address gender and ethnic-specific needs.

The consequent sections outline some of the suggested criteria concerning mobility that the bidders would need to comply when responding to the Call for Proposal.

The activities that support safety and resilience are also encouraged to be nominated for a grant. More details on these two aspects will be provided closer to the bid announcement.

The details of the Call will be finalized in consultation with the Government of North Macedonia closer to the bid announcement.

2. Eligibility

The Call is open only to municipalities in North Macedonia. All 81 units of local self-government (including the city of Skopje) in North Macedonia are eligible for funding. Partnerships between the municipalities are allowed and in fact, encouraged, to resolve joint mobility issues that span across their geographies. In this case, municipalities participating in a joint plan could benefit from economies of scale. Up to four municipalities can partner in order to address a joint mobility challenge. In the case of partnerships, one municipality will be the lead applicant and the others will have the role of partners. Only the lead applicant will submit the proposal. The partners need to prove need and reasons for the partnership.

3. Priority Areas for funding

Municipalities will respond to the Call by filling in the appropriate application form and submitting an Action Plan with specific activities covering **all** of the following priority themes:

- Priority 1: Transparent and inclusive public consultations to prepare the Action Plan
- Priority 2: Solutions to address mobility challenges identified by the communities, and
- Priority 3: Employment of under-represented groups such as Roma (women and men) and non-Roma women in transport and/or construction sectors.

The Plan would need to be based on a thorough needs assessment undertaken by the municipality before the submission of the proposal. The assessment must clearly include views, concerns and preferences of the above-mentioned diverse groups of population.

Beyond direct beneficiaries, municipalities are encouraged to consult other relevant stakeholders, e.g. transport service providers, construction companies and local employment agencies to prepare the Proposal.

4. Type of Potential Activities

Types of actions that can be financed as part of the submitted Action Plan may include but not be limited to the following:

- Developing continuous and targeted consultation mechanisms (e.g. door-to-door, online, mobile phone, through CSOs) with a wide range of population groups who likely have varying mobility needs. These groups include women and men across a diverse socio-economic and demographic spectrum, e.g. Roma, persons with disabilities and persons with limited mobility (e.g. senior residents, pregnant women).
- Undertaking targeted outreach campaigns for informing residents of changes in road/transport design in communities and employment opportunities in the sector;
- Introducing changes to public transport service to address the identified concerns with respect to availability, reliability and affordability of service (e.g. bus routes, timetables, service intervals, integrating fares between bus operators);
- Prioritizing streets/public space that have the direst needs for public infrastructure investments (e.g. deprived Roma neighborhoods lacking asphalted roads);
- Improving access for persons with physical disabilities to public infrastructure (e.g. ramps, audible push buttons for street crossing and accessible public toilets);
- Rehabilitating and/or constructing pedestrian infrastructure to allow for continuous and seamless travel and encourage active mobility;
- Addressing issues with public safety (e.g. street lighting);
- Undertaking public awareness campaigns to encourage cycling among all including women (women across the world are finding that the safety risks of cycling are significant enough to deter them from cycling. Also, they often do not know how to cycle, and many cannot afford a bike. Consider providing protected bike lanes that separate cyclists from vehicles alongside affordable bike renting schemes and a campaign to address any cultural issues that may be holding them back from cycling).
- Employing groups who are under-represented in the transport workforce (e.g. Roma women, Roma men and non-Roma women) in construction and transport related roles that this subcomponent will create. Utilize public procurement to include employment targets in the bidding documents. The Proposal will have an added value if municipalities employ women not just in any jobs but in those that are traditionally male-dominated such as, a bus driver, machine operator to lay asphalt, or an engineer.

The municipalities are encouraged to think unconventionally to solve some of the identified challenges through innovative ways. For example, municipalities could consider a program for recruiting, training and employing Roma women as bus drivers serving a rural area. This component could potentially serve multiple purposes: (i) employing a traditionally under-represented ethnic group (ii) contributing to addressing occupational segregation based on gender in the labor market, and (iii) addressing needs of rural population for public transport.

Other activities may include educational and behavioral interventions addressing deeply engraved gender and ethnic stereotypes. For example, it could include offering grants to women (Roma and non-Roma) to set up a taxi service and/or to build a parking lot on unused land which can be provided for free/at a subsidized rate. The latter can potentially help to alleviate the parking problem and also employ women and ethnic minorities in roles that are traditionally male dominated challenging the perception that these roles can only be done by males. Some of these interventions require resources and time. For example, identifying, training, licensing and on-boarding female drivers is a significant endeavor that must be planned carefully, and the municipalities are expected to allocate sufficient resources and timelines.

Another idea could involve community engagement methods, including those that embrace new technologies, social media, and collaborative methods, to better bring the public including vulnerable groups into conversations on the future of community and in decision-making.

Proposed activities would also need to comply with climate change issues and employment regulations.

5. Potential indicators

The plan must propose SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound) indicators against which progress will be tracked.

The indicators must be disaggregated by gender, ethnicity and other dimensions as much as possible/relevant.

The below indicators are brought only for illustration. Municipalities are expected to develop indicators based on the findings of their needs' assessment and the proposed activities.

Priority 1: Transparent and inclusive public consultations to prepare the Action Plan
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Plan reflects X number of concrete proposals made by X groups of population • Number and percentage of people who are satisfied with infrastructure investments
Priority 2: Solutions to address mobility challenges identified by the communities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of new/repainted pedestrian crossings • Number of street lighting units installed • Number of wheelchair accessible public restroom facilities • Number of accessibility features for people with mobility impairment (e.g. curb ramps, tactile warning, etc). • Cycle lanes provided/existing ones widened • Share of people cycling increased • Average travel time for people to essential services and jobs decreased • Average cost of travel decreased as a result of integrated fare among bus operators • Perceptions of safety in public space increased among all including Roma population
Priority 3: Employment of under-represented groups such as Roma (women and men) and non-Roma women in transport and/or construction sectors
<p>Number and proportion (%) of Roma men, Roma women and non-Roma women to be employed in different types of project-related jobs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unskilled and skilled construction work • Supervisors on site • Heavy machine operators • Engineers

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drivers of public transport • Public transport ticketing staff • Other roles to be identified
Number and proportion (%) of Roma men, Roma women and non-Roma women who receive training in <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construction roles • Supervisors on site • Heavy machine operators • Drivers • Public transport ticketing staff • Other roles to be identified.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bidding documents include numerical gender targets for employment and references to required physical design features.

6. Financial allocation

The overall indicative amount made available under this call for proposals is USD X. The minimum and maximum amounts of grants will be determined later.

7. Duration

The mobility plans should be implemented within 24 months from the award of the grant.

The grant will be given in two tranches.

The transfer of the second tranche will be conditional to the effective implementation of the activities under the first tranche.

8. Selection Criteria

1. General criteria	Max score 8
1.1 Geographical location (Regional balance) and size	
1.2 Urban / Rural municipality	
1.3 Population size of municipality	
1.4 Ethnic and gender composition of the municipality	
1.5 Number of informal settlements to be formalized	
2. Citizen Participation, Transparency and Accountability	Max score 12
2.1 Previous experience in undertaking participatory consultative processes including specific groups such as Roma, women, rural population, elderly, persons with disabilities, single parents etc.) and results	
2.2 Established communication channels with the citizens	
2.3 Established project partnerships with local businesses and NGO sector	
3. Municipal capacity	Max 10
3.1 Established diverse local project team to implement this proposal (ethnic/gender/social/geographic)	
3.2 Developed local action plan for Roma	
3.3 Developed local action plan for equal opportunities	
3.4 Developed urban mobility plan (of any kind)	
4. Relevance of the proposed actions (in the Action Plan)	Max 70

4.1. Relevance of the actions to the objective and priorities of the call	
4.2. Clearly defined and strategically chosen beneficiaries/target groups (needs and constraints clearly defined and proposals address them appropriately)	
4.3. Actions reflect a robust analysis of the problems of target groups	
4.4 Actions have a tangible impact on the target groups expressed in measurable way	
4.5 Actions are innovative and ambitious yet realistic (please see some examples)	
4.6 The proposal includes a clear monitoring system with SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound) indicators	
Maximum total score	100

Annex II: Legal Context Related to Roma and Gender Equality in North Macedonia

In compliance with the Constitution of the Republic of North Macedonia,²⁴ Article 9, citizens have equal freedoms and rights, irrespective of their sex, race, color, national and social background, political and religious conviction, wealth, and social status. The constitution underwent substantial amendments to incorporate the Ohrid Framework Agreement in 2001, when constitutional provisions concerning political, civil, and social rights were revised to further protect minority rights.

The Republic of North Macedonia is a signatory of a number of international acts pertaining to gender equality. As a successor country of the former Yugoslavia, North Macedonia has acceded to the UN Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (in force since September 17, 1991) and has ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (which came into force on October 17, 2003). Following the ratification of international documents that deal with the issue of violence against women, North Macedonia's parliament adopted the Declaration for Combating Violence against Women, including family violence,²⁵ in 2006, conveying the determination of members of parliament to fulfill the obligations undertaken by the state. North Macedonia also signed the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence in May 2011 and managed to ratify it in 2018. North Macedonia has improved its reporting with the last sixth periodical report for the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)²⁶ on Article 5 that refers to elimination of gender stereotypes and prejudices and Article 8 which refers to Employment where specific focus has been given to Roma.

The legislation for mainstreaming gender equality is the Law on Equal Opportunities of Women and Men²⁷ that was adopted in 2006 and amended in 2012. The main aim of this law is to establish equal opportunities for women and men in all spheres of life, to include both the private and public sector and to eliminate barriers to achieving full gender equality. "Equal opportunities" are understood to mean promotion of the principle of including equal participation of women and men in all spheres of the public and private sector, equal status and treatment in exercising all rights and in the development of their individual potential, and equal access to the results from this development. Thus, the law presents itself as a framework for gender mainstreaming and aims to overcome the current unfavorable social position of women and men, which is "a result of systematic discrimination or structural gender inequality resulting from historical and sociocultural conditions." It prescribes special measures (positive, encouraging, and program measures) for achieving gender equality.

Positive measures include giving priority to the less-represented genders under equal conditions until equal representation is achieved. The encouraging measures ensure special motivation or introduce special benefits in order to eliminate conditions that lead to inequality. Program measures are those focused on awareness raising, organizing activities and

²⁴ The Constitution of the Republic of North Macedonia (Ustav na Republika Makedonija), Official Gazette no. 52, 22.11.1992

²⁵ Declaration for Combating Violence against Women, including Family Violence (Декларација за борба против насилство врз жените, вклучувајќи го и семејното насилство) Official Gazette No. 124, 2006.

²⁶ 6th Periodical Report for CEDAW, 2017, Ministry of Labour and Social Policy.

²⁷ Law on equal opportunities of women and men (Zakon za ednakvi moznosti na zenite i mazite), Sluzbenesnik br.6, 13.01.2012

development, and implementation of action plans for equal opportunities. The responsible entities for implementing all these measures are the parliament, the government, the state bodies, the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, the ombudsman, the units of local-self-government, political parties, media, and so forth. The law specifically prohibits discrimination, harassment and sexual harassment.

The national mechanism for gender equality is represented by the Gender Equality Unit of the Ministry of Labor and Social Policy. In addition, the ministry's Department for Implementation of the Strategy and Roma Decade, which was set up in 2008 together with the National Coordinator for the Roma Decade²⁸ and Roma Strategy, is responsible for ensuring improvement of the conditions of Roma in the country. Furthermore, different national action plans for both gender equality and Roma inclusion have been adopted by the government and a number of paths and defined directions of activities have since been, or are being, followed through.

An important piece of legislation is the framework anti-discrimination law²⁹ adopted in 2010 and entered into force at the beginning of 2011. It expands the protection of rights already guaranteed with the Constitution of the Republic of North Macedonia and other laws, as well as ratified international agreements. The law defines discrimination as "any unjustified legal or factual, direct or indirect making of difference or unequal treatment or exclusion, restriction or providing priority toward individuals or groups based on sex, race, skin color, gender, membership in a marginalized group, ethnicity, language, citizenship, social origin, confession, disability, age, marital status, wealth, health, or any other basis." In 2019, gender identity and sexual orientation as a basis for discrimination were added to the definition.

A novelty introduced with this law is the setting up of the Commission for Protection from Discrimination as an independent body³⁰ funded by the state. The commission can act on complaints and provide opinion and recommendations in cases of discrimination. However, the new commission has not been constituted after the end of the mandate of the previous one in August 2019.

The ombudsman also plays an important role in the protection of the principle of nondiscrimination. In 2018, out of the 3,458 complainants who turned to the ombudsman, only 54.8 percent citizens declared their ethnicity, of whom 2.6 percent (91 citizens) were of Roma origin. The complaints submitted by the Roma applicants were mainly related to health care, the judiciary, and social welfare.

The government of North Macedonia adopted the Declaration for Advancement of the Position and Rights of Roma in 2011,³¹ followed by a number of documents focused mainly on four main aspects of the lives of Roma: employment, housing, health, and social protection. From the latest Strategy for the Roma in Republic of North Macedonia 2014–2020, which is a continuation of the previous one of 2005–2010, emanated the national action plan for

²⁸ In 2005, the Governments of 10 countries from Central and South-Eastern Europe joined forces to address the most pressing problems facing the Roma population through the creation of a multi-national platform - the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015. Throughout the Decade there emerged a growing consensus that solid analysis, based on reliable data, is a prerequisite for documenting and addressing the multidimensional exclusion experienced by Roma. The Decade, and subsequent supranational policy frameworks put significant emphasis on the need to improve the position of Roma in the areas of education, employment, health and housing, as well as to address cross-cutting issues of poverty reduction, gender equality and anti-discrimination. There were many founding international partners of the project including the World Bank, UNDP, the Council of Europe and Others.

²⁹ Law for prevention and protection of discrimination (Zakon za sprečavanje i zaštita od diskriminacija, Official Gazette no. 50, 13.04.2010. <http://www.kzd.mk/mk> - last accessed March 15, 2020.

³¹ Declaration for the advancement of the position and rights of Roma (Deklaracija za unapređivanje na položajima i pravata na Romite), Vlada na RM, Official Gazette no. 42/11

strengthening the position of the Roma women in society.³² Despite being a positive step in the right direction, the action plan focuses mostly on capacity building of public administration and CSOs to incorporate the gender concept in Roma inclusion documents and monitor their implementation as well as on capacity for raising issues of Roma women and raising awareness on domestic violence and child marriages.

Regional and global development framework also calls for inclusive transport policy and planning. For example, in the Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on Women and Transport from 2015,³³ prepared upon the request of the European Commission, gender disparities in the transport sector have been acknowledged, and the new Investment Plan for Europe, which aims to promote growth and jobs, must mainstream gender equality by eliminating existing gender impediments in all aspects of transport. Furthermore, it pledges greater recognition of, and prominence to, gender in transport policy of the European Union (EU). There have been developments within the international policy agenda in recent years, with UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)³⁴ recognizing the importance of incorporating gender aspect in achieving sustainable cities and communities pledging to provide access to safe, affordable, accessible, and sustainable transport systems for all and improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities, and older persons.

Despite the legal framework being set up to allow for improved position of Roma women from a very early age, they experience prejudice and rejection from mainstream society.³⁵ Indeed, many Roma struggle to secure the full enjoyment of their economic and social rights, including the right to education, employment, adequate housing, and health. Since the focus of the Roma decade has been on these four areas of concern, the situation regarding Roma and mobility and urban transport has not been explored, resulting in lack of relevant data for the issues covered by this assessment.

³² *National Action Plan for strengthening the position of Roma Women* (Nacionalen akciski plan za zajaknuvanje na položbata na romskata žena vo opstestvoto), 2016, Ministry of labour and Social Policy.

³³ <https://www.eesc.europa.eu/our-work/opinions-information-reports/opinions/women-and-transport> - last accessed March 15, 2020

³⁴ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/?menu=1300> - last accessed March 15, 2020

³⁵ Andrea Spitätszky. *Roma in the Republic of Macedonia: Challenges and Inequalities in Housing, Education and Health*, Roma Democratic Development Association SONCE and Minority Rights Group International. https://minorityrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/MRG_Brief_Mac_ENG_Nov18.pdf

Annex III: Study Methodology

The analysis used a mixed-method approach composed of the following:

- Desk research
- Focus groups discussions (FGDs)
- Semi - structured interviews with stakeholders
- Audit walks.

The data collection took place from September 2019 to March 2020.

Desk research

In order to examine legislation for gender equality and the situation of Roma, desk analysis of laws and secondary legislation was conducted, as was a review of academic and scientific literature to inform the development of the methodology. The desk analysis covered the national legal framework for gender equality, social inclusion and anti-discrimination, as well as gender- and Roma-specific strategies at the local level and relevant statistical data.

Focus groups

Ten focus groups were organized in two batches. The first batch included eight focus groups conducted from November 6 to 22, 2019, of which three took place in the municipality of Kumanovo and three others in the municipality of Sveti Nikole, with a total of 78 participants. The focus groups consisted of Roma women, non-Roma women and Roma men. The age of women ranged from 19 to 58 years and of men from 23 to 65 years. The participants had varied social-economic characteristics: employed, unemployed, retired, and students. The focus groups in Kumanovo were conducted in the premises of the nongovernmental organization Roma Community Center DROM and the groups consisted of the following:

- Roma women: 7 participants
- Roma men: 13 participants
- Non-Roma women: 8 participants.

Two focus groups in Sveti Nikole were conducted in a local coffee shop and one for rural women were conducted at the elementary school in the village of Erdzelija. The groups consisted of the following:

- Roma women: 9 participants
- Roma men: 10 participants
- Non-Roma women: 12 participants
- Rural women from 3 different villages (Erdzelija, Mustafino, Amzabegovo): 19 participants.

Session lasted 70–80 minutes. All discussions were audio taped and notes were taken during and immediately after the interviews.

The second batch of focus groups took place from February 20 to March 5 March 2020 in Skopje and consisted of participants from transport-provider companies and road-construction

companies. Both took place in the Ministry of Transport and Communications premises and consisted of the following:

- Seven representatives of transport companies from five different municipalities (2 females, 5 males)
- Sixteen representatives of construction companies from 8 different municipalities (2 females, 14 males).

Semi-structured interviews with various representatives of the municipalities

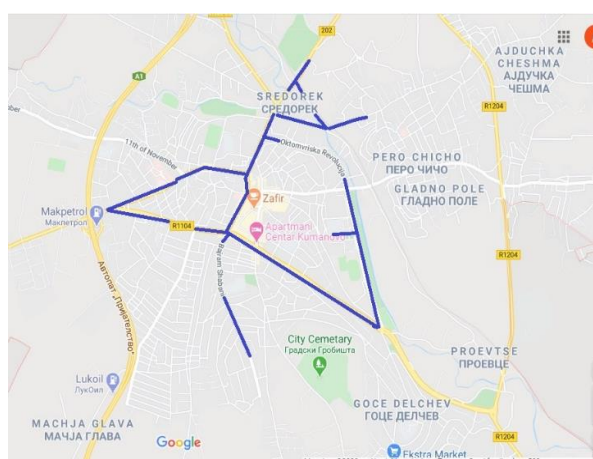
Eight interviews were conducted with municipal representatives (5 in Kumanovo and 3 in Sveti Nikole) from different departments:

- Equal Opportunities Coordinator or Deputy Coordinator (Sveti Nikole, Kumanovo)
- Representative for Roma issues (Kumanovo)
- Senior Inspector and Manager of Department for Inspection (Sveti Nikole)
- Senior Associate for Local Roads and Streets (Kumanovo)
- Manager of Sector for Communal Affairs, Environment Protection and Traffic (Kumanovo)
- Municipal Secretary (Kumanovo), and
- Mayor (Sveti Nikole).

Audit walks

Safety audit walks were planned for beginning of March 2020. However, due to the Corona virus outbreak they had to be canceled, and the consultant made an individual round in the two municipalities, visiting the localities identified by stakeholders in the focus groups and interviews and documented the situation with camera. The photos included in this analysis are a result of that individual audit.

Map 1. Kumanovo



Map 2: Sveti Nikole



In Kumanovo the audit route passed through (i) III Makedonska Udarна Brigada Boulevard, (ii) Goce Delchev Street, (iii) Sredorek (Roma neighborhood in the center of Kumanovo), (iv)

Bavchi (Roma neighborhood also known as Pero Chicho), (v) Done Bozhinov Street, (vi) Oktomvriska Revolucija Boulevard, and (vii) Bajram Shabani Street (see map 1).

In Sveti Nikole the route passed through (i) Veljko Vlahovikj Street, (ii) Orce Nikolov Street, (iii) Karposhova Street, (iv) Marshal Tito Street, (v) 11 Oktomvri Street, (vi) Rudine (Roma neighborhood), (vii) Shutka (Roma neighborhood), and (viii) village of Erdzelija (see map 2).

Annex IV. Observations from walking audit

As discussed earlier in the section on methodology, the Project team supplemented the qualitative research with safety audit walks in the two municipalities, visiting the localities identified by stakeholders in the focus groups and interviews, and documented the situation with camera. The walks confirmed indeed the concerns shared in FGDs.

In Kumanovo the route passed through the following localities:

- **III Makedonska Udarna Brigada Boulevard:** Noticed a lot of irregularities, mostly cars parked in the sidewalks and some even in the roads.

Photo 10. bus stop blocked by vehicles, Kumanovo



- **Goce Delchev Street:** Noticed a van (most probably public transport) picking up a passenger on the pedestrian crossing.
- **Sredorek (Roma neighborhood in the center of Kumanovo) via Done Bozhinov Street:** On the way to Sredorek (Roma neighborhood), via Done Bozhinov Street, noticed pedestrians walking in the main street due to cars parked on sidewalks and many pedestrian crossings of faded color. In Sredorek, at the entrance greeted by a waste container with garbage in and around it. Streets are very narrow, almost impossible to reach by car and for a garbage truck to enter. Streets full of potholes, some of them “improved” with bricks, but overall condition of roads very bad.
- **Bavchi (Roma neighborhood also known as Pero Chicho):** Bavchi connected to Sredorek via bridge across the river full of garbage. Streets not asphalted and muddy.

Place in the street resembling landfill just near the houses. The citizens living there complained that the road needs to be asphalted.

- **Done Bozhinov street and Oktomvriska Revolucija Boulevard:** Although in this boulevard sidewalks are protected by posts, some of them have been removed and cars were parked, especially in front of the stores. Sidewalks are generally in good condition. There are no bike lanes. Noticed people riding bicycle on the street. Also checked Pirinska Street and the Pero Nakov High School, and it had little to no sidewalks.
- **Bajram Shabani Street:** Street are steep uphill and narrow, making it almost impossible for two cars to pass at the same time. There are small sidewalks, some only on one side of the street, if any. Municipality not accessible to people in a wheelchair.

In Sveti Nikole the route passed through the following localities:

- **Veljko Vlahovich Street:** Street generally wide, however sidewalks are with holes and there is no bicycle lane.
- **Orce Nikolov Street:** Narrow street with no sidewalks.
- **Karposhova Street:** No sidewalk either.
- **Marshal Tito Street, 11 Oktomvri Street, and Rudine (Roma neighborhood):** Street 11 Oktomvri is asphalted with part covered in bricks, while the street leading directly to Rudine is not asphalted at all.
- **Veljko Vlahovikj Street and Shutka (Roma neighborhood):** On the right side there is Kumanovska Street where Shutka begins. Some parts were asphalted but there were holes in the road and the neighborhood was on downhill. The situation is better than in Rudine and much better than the Roma neighborhoods in Kumanovo.
- **Village Erdzelija:** Eight kilometers from the city, this village lacks asphalt, although before one enters the village, up to two kilometers of road are being constructed. On the right side of the entrance of the village there is a school; the asphalt is not good, and it has holes. The sidewalks are not that good, they need to be constructed and a good part doesn't have sidewalks at all. If one entering Erdzelija from the left side there is no asphalt at all, the road is very muddy, and there are no sidewalks.

Photo 11: street in Sveti Nikole

