

Scaling-up: Mobile Outreach Teams

Regional Project on Social Rights for Vulnerable Groups

Short Background

Outreach approaches in social work are meant to reach people at risk who are not in contact with any social services, but who need help. *Outreach* teams are acting where no one else is: they meet people in their direct living environment, both in the private and the public domain.

Professionals in state institutions, for instance in municipalities, often lack technical and methodological know-how in the area of social outreach work and thus rarely provide outreach activities. NGOs often fill this gap. Yet, employees in state institutions seldom see local NGOs as partners in the provision of social services and do not use the available capacities.

About the approach

The establishment of so-called Mobile Outreach Teams (MOT) offers the chance to bring state employees and NGOs together and to ‘join forces’ – thereby creating trust, building networks, exchanging information, saving resources and increasing the availability of services for vulnerable persons.

Members of MOT’s are social workers from public Centres for Social Work (CSW), professionals from NGOs (e.g. social worker, psychologist) and representatives from target communities (e.g. Roma mediators). These teams have been established during the predecessor project (SoRI I) in five countries of the Western Balkans (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, North Macedonia and Serbia), according to the specifics and needs of each country. The team members have undergone trainings to be better skilled and to offer high-quality services.

Results

Through the model of Mobile Outreach Teams the delivery of social services to members of the most vulnerable groups on a local level is improved. Elderly people, for instance, receive medical treatment on the spot and do not have to make the effort of going to a doctor. Others are told where

to find help and access existing social services. Besides, the cooperation among various local institutions is improved. State institutions and NGOs exchange information, work together closely and benefit from each other’s work.

Best Practice Example

The *Mobile Intervention Team* is one of the referral mechanisms in the City of Bijeljina, Bosnia and Herzegovina. The initiative for the formation of the MOT in Bijeljina came from the NGO ‘Otaharin’. The Mobile Outreach Team in Bijeljina closely cooperated with the *Working group for the protection and safety of children*. All cases where children’s welfare cannot fully be guaranteed were reported to the working group.

After the mapping of relevant locations, MOTs have visited these areas and implemented the following activities: assistance in basic rights realisation and referring people to other community services, education and awareness raising of communities on their social rights, highlighting the importance of education and offering support in regards to social protection.

Title of the example	Mobile Interventions / Outreach Teams in municipality Bijeljina
Timeframe	Approximate duration of planning and establishing a mobile team: 2- 3 months Implementation: continuously
Partners involved	NGO “OTAHARIN” Bijeljina, Center for social work, Municipality and occasionally medical staff, teachers and police officers
Target group(s)	Vulnerable groups, e.g. poor families, children on the street, Roma families
Country	Bosnia and Herzegovina



■ Mobile Outreach Work