



OVERVIEW ABOUT ASSOCIAZIONE 21 LUGLIO ONLUS

Associazione 21 luglio Onlus was founded in April 2010 by a group of social workers and human right activists with a defined mission – **the protection and promotion of Roma and Sinti rights in Italy** mainly through the protection of children's rights and the fight against any form of discrimination and intolerance.

Since its establishment, the Association has endeavoured to become one of the leading advocates in implementing anti-discrimination and human rights law with regard to Roma communities in Italy, introducing for the first time a human rights based approach to Roma issues, never used before by any other organization in Italy when dealing with Roma.

Associazione 21 luglio Onlus has become a point of reference for Roma communities living in Rome.

Through a constant monitoring of Roma "camps", the Association regularly gets in touch with members of the Roma communities and gathers their feedback and opinions about priorities and emerging critical issues.

Associazione 21 luglio's research department produces reports containing data and information on the living conditions of Roma and Sinti in Italy on a regular basis. With its reports the Association monitors and speaks out against any form of discrimination, segregation and violation of human rights caused by local and national policies, with a focus on children's rights. Housing, health, security, education and legal status are among the main issues covered.

Research is the basis of the Association's advocacy actions. Associazione 21 luglio presents its reports to institutions and political decision-makers, organizes visits to the "camps" with members of the Italian Parliament and of European institutions, drafts recommendations, disseminates letters and public appeals, prepares reports for the United Nations. The aim of the Association's **advocacy strategies** is to influence change in the policy measures which produce ethnic marginalization. When necessary, the Association undertakes **legal actions** related to violations of human and children's rights as well as incitement to racial hatred.

Furthermore, Associazione 21 luglio conducts activities to **raise awareness** of human rights violations and **promotes positive models** and experiences in order to eradicate widespread preconceptions and stereotypes on Roma and Sinti in Italy.

The Association implements **educational projects** aimed at the realization of the social rights of socially vulnerable children and adolescents.

Over the years Associazione 21 luglio Onlus succeeded in bringing to light the several human right violations suffered by Roma and Sinti communities in Italy, especially the condition of extreme segregation and exclusion experienced by Roma living in the camps. Thanks to its research, communication and advocacy work, the Association has successfully raised public opinion's awareness dismantling prejudices and stereotypes, and has contributed to influence change in the policy measures which produce ethnic marginalization. A widespread consensus on the need of abandoning emergency measures has been reached and overcoming the camp system has become a shared viewpoint among decision makers and public opinion.

For more info, see:

<http://www.21luglio.org/21luglio/english-version/?lang=en>

<http://www.21luglio.org/21luglio/what-we-do/?lang=en>



ASSOCIAZIONE 21 LUGLIO'S WORK AT GRASSROOTS LEVEL INVOLVING ROMA WOMEN

Since its foundation, Associazione 21 luglio Onlus has been implementing **projects aimed at advancing the rights of vulnerable and disadvantaged communities**. One of the main objectives of the Association is to empower people that experience social and economic vulnerability, especially women and minors, to seek better opportunities for themselves and change their living conditions.

Empowerment activities carried on by **Associazione 21 luglio follow a human rights approach and promote actions "in the context", actively involving the members of the target communities from a grassroots level.**

The following activities, with a particular attention to gender issues and involving Roma women, were carried out in the past:

1. WORKSHOPS FOR ROMA AND SINTI ACTIVISTS

In 2014-2015 Associazione 21 luglio organized **3 cycles of human rights workshops** in collaboration with the European Roma Rights Center and Amnesty International Italian Section. The workshops were addressed to young Roma men and women longing to become protagonists of their lives and actively engaged inside their communities. A total of 35 activists coming from all over Italy were trained. The youth that successfully completed the training path gained knowledge about human rights promotion and protection, fight against discrimination and civic activism. Through role-plays and laboratories, they learnt basic elements of communication, campaigning, advocacy, activism and legal instruments and were inspired by the good practices and positive examples presented with the aim of creating awareness about the possibility of change. More in general, through the participation in the trainings, the activists were capacitated to effectively claim the rights of their Roma communities and to effectively dialogue with institutions.

Keeping in consideration the centrality of gender dimension in the framework of human rights, gender issues were proposed to the activists during the workshops. A special session held by some experts (members of the NGO "A room just for you", a LSE student and a sociologist) was, in fact, dedicated to gender issues. The aim was to enhance women's participation and representation, fighting against women's violence and combating discrimination acts and thoughts tied to gender.

A special attention was also paid to the composition of the groups of participants in the workshops: out of 35, 13 were young women, between 18 and 25 years old.

2. SUMMER CAMPS FOR ROMA GIRLS

In 2014-2015 Associazione 21 luglio organized **two summer camps addressed to 20 young Roma girls aged 11 – 18 years living in formal and informal settlements in Rome**. The summer camps were residential and represented an opportunity for the girls to have a reserved space where to dedicate time to themselves, shared views with peers and deepen their knowledge about their femininity. Special attention was dedicated to the discovery of the female body and to sexuality thanks to the participation of a gynaecologist. What emerged was a deep ignorance about anatomic issues and sexual mechanisms, a taboo that prevent girls to ask information to their mothers or other female figures, a sense of inappropriateness and embarrassment, a big imbalance between female and male roles inside Roma communities.

3. SAR SAN PROJECT

Since its launch in 2012, SAR SAN project aimed at promoting the right to wellbeing of Roma children and families and to enhance their social inclusion mainly through empowerment activities. The project, financed



by the Bernard van Leer Foundation, was carried out in cooperation with ABCittà, a social cooperative, until its end in October 2017.

The involvement of Roma girls, women and mothers was crucial to the successful implementation of the project's activities. They were protagonists of:

- **A video "I am only a young girl"** launched in 2012 and addressed to the President of the Italian Republic where they explain what it means to be a Roma girl living in a settlement, their expectations, dreams and the difficulties encountered. The video was the result of a full year of participatory process about self-narration that involved a group of Roma girls.
The video is available here: <https://vimeo.com/65123732>
- **A workshop** held in 2014 aimed at strengthening Roma women's knowledge about their health and competences in maternal and paediatric care. The workshop was organized with the support of doctors (gynaecologist and paediatrician) working for an association that promotes free access to healthcare in a very marginalised neighbourhood of the Capital. Special attention was paid to infective diseases, sexuality and pregnancy. 24 women participated in the workshop every week for three months.
- **A self-narration path** organized in 2015 that gave birth to two events of human library (held in Rome). A group of 14 Roma women and 2 men took the challenge transforming themselves in living books with the aim of abating stereotypes and prejudices about Roma people through their personal stories. It was the first time that an event of human library was centred about Roma issue in Italy and the result was very successful with plenty of enthusiastic "readers" eager to know more and read as many books as possible.

See:

<https://sarsanblog.wordpress.com/2015/06/04/la-prima-biblioteca-vivente-interamente-dedicata-ai-rom/>

<https://sarsanblog.wordpress.com/2015/06/22/a-roma-la-prima-biblioteca-vivente-sul-tema-rom/>

4. RESEARCH

All the researches produced by Associazione 21 luglio are based on data collected by first-hand on the field and the direct voices and witnesses of Roma people experiencing human rights violations.

In three of its reports, the Association investigated Roma women perspectives:

- **"My mother was Roma"**: the research presented a collection of stories of Roma mothers from whom social assistants took away the children through Court's proceedings. The report highlighted how the exclusion faced by these women and the racism towards them played an important role in the result of the proceedings.

The report was published in October 2013 and is available in English here:

<http://www.21luglio.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/My-mother-was-Roma.pdf>

- **"Terminal Barbuta"**: Roma women living in La Barbuta slum (an institutional settlement at the outskirts of Rome) were interviewed to understand how the social exclusion created by encampment policies has a negative impact on the opportunity to exit from intra-family violence.

The report was published in October 2014 and is available here:

<http://www.21luglio.org/21luglio/terminal-barbuta-villaggio-solidarieta-barbuta-roma-presente-futuro-campo-per-soli-rom-ottobre-2014-2/>



- **“I am not old enough”**: the research, dealing with the issue of early marriages, is based on data collected in 2014-2016 among Roma families living in the slums of the Capital, through focus groups and interviews that involved Roma youngsters (both female and male) and their parents. Special attention was paid on the influence of the inhabited space of the slum in view of the recurrence and the preservation of the phenomenon of early marriages.

The report was published in November 2017 and is available in English here:

<http://www.21luglio.org/21luglio/early-marriages-the-rate-reaches-77-the-capitals-slums/?lang=en>