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**Literature Review**

Based on our research, we would like to present our literature review findings. As indicated in our previous communication, RomPraha has selected female Roma entrepreneurs ranging from 18 to 48 years as our focus group. We intend to work with established female entrepreneurs, mostly, but not exclusively, of Romani ethnicity, who have had considerable experience with entrepreneurship and have appropriate business skills, knowledge and technical expertise to support aspiring Roma entrepreneurs.

When asked during the period between 1 November 2019 – 10 January 2020 what immediate opportunities they saw for engaging in entrepreneurial activities, 15 out of 17 Roma responders stated that the prospect of starting their own business did not seem feasible, seemed hard to imagine, that they did not envision a specific way of entrepreneurship that would suit them or that they were not really interested in running a business since it seemed too complicated and/or too risky. When asked if they would benefit from training workshops or a mentoring program in which they could learn about entrepreneurship, their response was overwhelmingly positive.

We also asked them what kind of competencies and areas of knowledge they would find useful to learn. Their most frequent queries pertained to the ways of obtaining the financial capital necessary to launch their business. They also expressed an interest in learning the essential skills for starting and keeping up their business. All concerned replied that they would welcome a chance to enter into a mentor-mentee relationship and thought this would be a practical way for them to observe entrepreneurial practices of their more experienced colleagues.

The consensus was that by learning first-hand through observing and actively participating in business activities by way of an informal internship they could gain not only sufficient skills and knowledge but importantly also enough confidence to later brave starting their own business. We consider it significant that the vast majority of the young women we approached did not feel the necessary confidence to even seriously consider starting a business.

To address the concerns outlined above, we turned to the literature we reviewed. We found Violina Rindova’s published article “Introduction to Special Topic Forum: Entrepreneuring as Emancipation” to be particularly useful as it suggests practices for encouraging emerging young female entrepreneurs, including members of Czech ethnic minorities. Moverover, the paper authored by three academics working in the field of sociology Ondřej Kročil, Miroslav Dopita and Richard Pospíšil entitled “Social Entrepreneurship in the Context of Employment Policy – the Case of the Czech Republic and its Overview in Selected European Union Countries” proposes ways for aspiring business women to get support by applying for various grants within the European Union and also by partnering with other businesswomen, aspiring and established, to ease the beginning of their journey to successful entrepreneurship.

**Progress based on questionnaires assessment**

Based on our assessment of the questionnaires we have adjusted and further specified the data gathered from our literature review to more accurately represent our project target group. The following section includes a detailed analysis of the questionnaire results and a succinct conclusion section which summarizes the relevance of the new date for the forthcoming stages of the project.

**Questionnaire results**

The following report summarizes the findings and assessment of the questionnaires distributed by the Prague-based organization and a PAL Women Project partner to the stakeholders selected by the organization. According to the regulations of the project, the questionnaire was distributed 50 women. The women participants fall within the designated age group with their age ranging from 17 to 47 years old. Our dedicated ethnic minority comprises Roma women based on the specialization and experience of the RomPraha organization.

All the participants who have kindly completed the questionnaire we informed about the purpose of the project and were briefed as to the details of the project objectives prior to filling out the questionnaire. Moreover, the participating women who completed the questionnaires did so of their own accord and without any influence from our organization.

In addition to the 50 questionnaires, RomPraha has distributed and retrieved seven more questionnaires from mentors or experts in the EU and non-Czech citizens. The 50 questionnaires were both distributed and completed in the Czech language. While the seven additional questionnaires distributed to foreign mentors and experts were distributed and completed in the English language. The same impartial procedure above described for the 50 responders was applied to the seven foreign responders as well.

At this stage of the project, the questionnaire was designed to find out more relevant information about our target group in order to address their needs effectively. More importantly, we placed emphasis on learning more about the skills and knowledge base required by social workers and experts in order to assist best our target group in engaging in entrepreneurial activities.

With respect to the our age group, all responders are diversely placed on the 17-47 years of age range. The average age is between 33 and 35 years. However, we suggest that the average be understood bearing in mind that the age range is considerable and therefore the average if given too much weight may result in a reductive impression.

With respect to the highest achieved education, again our responder varied significantly with the most frequent answers being secondary or bachelor or masters degree. Three of our seven foreign expert responders answered by selecting a higher education, indicating a post-graduate training or a doctoral degree.

Out of the 50 responders, all responded that they currently work in either business sector, education sector or social sector. The majority answered by choosing business sector.

The open response to their role in their organization varied. Several answered “teacher”, “instructor”, “business owner” and “manager.” Two replied that they work in a consulting/advisory function within their company.

The overwhelming majority of the responders answered affirmatively to the question where they have previously supported Roma women. Those that answered yes indicated that they have done so for between two to four years. In three cases responder have stated they have done so for five up to 10 years.

All but two responders answered yes to the question asking whether they have ever worked in a sector that involves entrepreneurship. For the subsequent question, most answered that they engaged in entrepreneurship for one year or less or between two and four years. In addition, 30 out of 50 have come into contact or know personally at least one Roma woman who has experience in entrepreneurship.

Of particular interest was the question enquiring about reasons why many Roma women do not pursue entrepreneurial activities compared to the rest of women. The responses varied by the highest number was given to fear of risk, lank of motivation and a lack of expert support. Curiously, last of competence was had the least incidence. Another chosen cause was a lack of success stories.

With respect to the challenges for Roma women during the initial stage of starting their business, the most frequently cited cause was a lack of liquidity and financial issues, the second was gender discrimination together with a lack of education/training. Another given cause was doubt and a lack of self-confidence.

Our responders believe that stakeholders in general need to be sensitized to support entrepreneurial activities of Roman women. The second most significant reason according to their experience working with Roman women is insufficient education about entrepreneurship.

Of the ten skills for entrepreneurship, all of them were considered essential. Problem solving ranked as extremely important as well as critical thinking and persistence. Sympathy and cognitive flexibility we given the smallest ranking while still considered important.

Of the five questions designed specifically for Roma women category, which assessed the following answers. The most important skills was communication followed by time management and social networking. Computer skills ranked last.

Discrimination and a lack of finances were perceived as the two major causes preventing Roman women from starting their own business. Another obstacle was presented by discouragement from friends and family. Curiously, most did not feel there is a lack of organizations in the Czech Republic supporting Roma people.

In terms of the most useful way of learning business skills, most concluded that online training would be the most helpful avenue. This was followed closely of a one-on-one mentor-mentee relationship.

Regarding experience with business, almost all responders have some experience with running or owning a business. This seems logical since we approached women who we thought could offer their experience to benefit to project.

The final question pertained to the team environment at work asking who the responders would prefer to work with in their business. Most answered they would like to collaborate with people with relevant experience or with family members. Only a few responded they would chose to work by themselves and look for additional staff at a later stage once their business has been successfully launched.

**Conclusions**

We conclude based on the evaluated results of the questionnaires online training for Roma women is essential as well as supporting networks and the providing of one-on-one mentor-mentee relationships. We also believe that the results have helped us prepare a series of educational master classes more relevant and more carefully tailored to the needs of our target group. In particular, we believe it is crucial to help against the fears of discrimination and an aversion to risk.

In addition, based on the seven questionnaires we received from our foreign expert responders, we conclude that we need to concentrate on helping to cultivate a healthy self-confidence in our target group. It is paramount that we help create an environment for Roman women in which they feel encouraged to pursue business and believe it actually is possible for them to succeed. We intend to use the questionnaire results further concentrate our efforts of assisting Roman women along their entrepreneurial journey as best and as caringly as we can.

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