

DESCRIPTION OF SUCCESSFUL READING PROGRAMME PROGRAMME TITLE: "Read with Us!" PROGRAMME ORGANISER(S): Open Society Foundations	
Description Created by LiRe Partner Institution: W.J Grabski Public Library in Ursus	
Time & Place	Target Group(s)
F. Y .R. O. Macedonia, Bulgaria, Hungary, Slovakia, and Romania 2009-2010	5-18 year-old children
Short Description (Max. 200 words)	
<p>The Open Society Roma Initiatives is dedicated to promoting the equality and integration of Europe's largest ethnic minority. <i>Read with Us!</i> was a project that promoted reading among families from disadvantaged regions in Bulgaria, Hungary, F.Y.R.O. Macedonia, Romania, and Slovakia. The project used books and reading as tools to create opportunities to stimulate social dialogue and promote reconciliation within the society. The project was related to the wider Roma Mentor Project, which connected successful Roma individuals with public schools and after-school learning programs. The project drew on a network of Roma volunteers who mentored and inspired children, by working with them and communicating a philosophy of Roma emancipation, pride, and self-assertion.</p>	
Objectives (General & Specific)	
<p>General Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To improve the reading and writing skills of pupils in basic and general education - To increase children's knowledge of literature and culture <p>Specific Objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To promote reading among families from disadvantaged regions in Bulgaria, Hungary, Macedonia, Romania, and Slovakia - To strengthen Roma identity and pride among young Roma who have participated in academic, internship, and scholarship programs supported by the Open Society Foundations - To raise the skills and knowledge of the weakest performing quarter - To increase cross-curricular activity in the areas specified in the project - To have the pupils read more, both at school and in their leisure time - To improve methods for teaching writing skills - To involve celebrities and opinion makers into reading promotion 	
Scheme of Reading Promotion Actions & Activities	
<p>The main elements of the campaign were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • continuous book collection • dissemination of books to schools and communities in target areas • involvement of celebrities and opinion makers who spent a full day at a school reading and talking with the children 	

- disseminating many stories, which carried messages about acceptance of diversity, different communities living together and friendship
- establishing Mother Centers in disadvantaged settlements with a high number of Roma inhabitants

Results / Indicators of Success

The programme directly involved approximately 1,500 children from 38 locations. The programme also had 40 celebrities participate in local events, which helped generate widespread media coverage of the campaign. The year-long campaign resulted in donations of more than 17,000 new and used books.

The results of the project were:

- Creating many activities to promote reading and writing skills and to increase the knowledge of literature
- Improving collaboration between schools and local communities
- Improving reading and writing skills in a collaborative effort between basic education and special needs education
- Connecting Roma children with public schools and after-school learning programmes
- Involving Roma adult volunteers
- Inspiring Roma children by working with them and communicating a philosophy of Roma emancipation, pride, and self-assertion
- Motivating children to go to school, study, and develop their skills and talents.

CONCLUSIONS (WHAT WORKED WELL AND WHY)

Parents and teachers actively participated in the events. 1,500 children were involved in cross-curricular activities. Mothers could come to Mother Centers with their children, who were looked after by other club members in turns. The activities, discussions, and lectures taking place in the centers were all based on the needs, interests, and problems of the adults and the children. The whole project was unique because educators drew upon their personal experience, education, knowledge and cultural heritage to interact with children from 50 schools in 38 locations, across five countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

References:

www.soros.org/initiatives/roma