

# Gender Sensitive Theatre

## The Inequality Challenge. Innovative Solutions to a Global Issue

### The Challenge

There are no formal or legal obstacles to practicing gender equality in Serbia in full. Different laws, strategies or programmes tackle this issue. Nevertheless, what prevents these efforts to be truly effective is that these documents and public policies do not question nor address the structural causes of the given situation, such as patriarchy. Furthermore, gender divisions in Serbia are well established due to the lack of will and opportunities to see the perspective of others. This is especially true for the traditionally 'stronger' masculine gender.

Serbian youth has grown up in turbulent times and in a cultural and economic isolation, which additionally strengthened the gender gap and male domination. However, gender issues are graver within Roma youth and Roma returnees due to the replication of cultural patterns that traditionally marginalise women. There is also a considerable amount of child marriages, which strongly perpetuates gender-based violence and has grave effects on women's life experience.

### The Objective

The project aims at encouraging youth from vulnerable population groups in Serbia, especially Roma and returnee population, to challenge and question traditional gender roles. By doing this, the project focuses on changing adopted gender-related attitudes, expectations, norms and behavioural patterns. It does so by bringing people closer together to eventually overcome re-produced conservative power relations and to enhance non-stereotypical, non-discriminative and non-violent relationships.

Project title	Tackling gender inequality through theatre-based education among most vulnerable groups in Serbia
Commissioned by	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
Country	Serbia
Implementing Organisation	Serbian Association for Sexual and Reproductive Rights (SRH)
Partner Organisations	Roma Association Zaječar, Association Ternipe Pirot, Humanitarian Centre Rom Obrenovac, Alternative Centre for Girls Kruševac and Research and Educational Centre Vršac
Duration	August 2018 to September 2019

### The Target Group

The main target group of the project are young Roma between 14 and 27 years of both genders.

In the first phase, SRH Serbia will be working with them directly in four cities across Serbia (Vršac, Kruševac, Zaječar, Pirot) and in the capital Belgrade covering most of Serbia's administrative territory and reaching out to young Roma people through an existing network of civil society organisations and individuals, SRH Serbia already works with. This makes it possible to cover a variety of Roma settlements and communities with different cultural patterns, different traditions, religious denominations and family structures, reaching a diversified group of young people.

In the south of Serbia, Albanian youth will be involved, including Albanian returnees who returned to Serbia under the EU Readmission Agreement. In the north of Serbia, the project will focus on young people from Hungarian and Croatian minorities as well as other vulnerable population groups.



◀ Location of the Inequality Challenge's project:  
● Serbia



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## The Approach

The project engaged young people in a guided discussion about gender roles through participatory theatre. Therefore, the project used an original stage play and scenarios produced by SRH Serbia in cooperation with an experienced professional playwright. The storyline follows real-life situations and problems (such as parents' reactions on marriage between Roma person and person from the majority population) and directly allow participants to express deep emotions and actively involve them in the process of learning and empowerment. To boost this effect, men play all female roles and women will play all male roles. This role reversal has the potential to galvanise the young audience into questioning stable and deeply rooted gender-based stereotypes.

Trained professionals moderate discussions on gender roles and the gender mainstreaming approach for the entire duration of the plays. They are also measuring the impact of participatory theatre on gender role perception as well as on reproductive health and sexual practices knowledge. Furthermore, the subsequent guided discussions about the plays and the video recording of these discussions allows further exploration of gender roles and responsibilities and act as a learning opportunity for both immediate participants and future viewers.

The project aims to involve additional 6,000 young people through online platforms and convey messages to improve understanding of gender-related issues.

## The milestones

In the period from August to October 2018, the stage plays were developed and the terms of reference for partnering organisations were created. Moreover, SRH Serbia developed and adjusted evaluation tools for the project. It also selected local NGOs as partnering organisations and organised a seminar where SRH Serbia introduced partner organisations to the theatre concept, its methodology and the technical issues related to the project.

The above mentioned plays' performances started in early December and continued in the following months. At the same time, SRH Serbia starts mapping different online platforms in order to being able to engage additional 6,000 young people and present them with challenging notions on gender roles as well as traditional responsibilities and encourage further discussion with their peers. After four plays project involved 5,000 young people through online platforms and convey messages to improve understanding of gender-related issues.

At the end of the tour, the project team will make a short movie composed of a substantial body of collected reactions, feedback and attitudes of young people discussing gender roles.

Results challenged conservative gender-related attitudes and behaviour among youth with the ultimate goal to change them. The project managed to increase knowledge and change notions of 'others' in terms of genders, ethnicity or cultures. Moreover, the project increased capacity of local, partnering NGOs.

### About the Inequality Challenge

*The Inequality Challenge supports innovative approaches that tackle inequality and the 'leave no one behind' principle of the 2030 Agenda with the ultimate goal to integrate and upscale those approaches into German Development Cooperation's portfolio. Initiated by the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), it supports ten projects in India, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Mongolia, Jordan, Serbia, Nigeria, Mauritania, Brazil and Mexico with up to 100,000 EUR.*

*GIZ manages the Inequality Challenge. For further information, please visit [www.inequality-challenge.com](http://www.inequality-challenge.com) or contact Tiffany Sacher, [fundmanagement@giz.de](mailto:fundmanagement@giz.de).*

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