Turkish Roma Youths

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WORKING WITH TRY NETWORK

Intro

The content of this booklet is based on experience, exchange of information, learning by doing and working with the young Roma groups from Turkey (Edirne, Dikili and Hatay).

I hope you will feel the same energy I felt working with these dynamic young individuals, while reading it. The booklet offers observations and lessons learnt, while working with Roma youth. I managed to put the theoretical knowledge I posses into practice and come out with my own conclusions. This means that the booklet as such will not offer readymade receipts or theories that will work instantly while working with young people. WE must be aware that working with young individuals often means to adapt to their dynamics and not the other way around. Putting pressure on them and telling them what to do, but also taking the ownership of their idea, can lead into creating young dependant passive people. What we want is to have proactive young people, rather than reactive. But, can this be achieved over night taking into consideration that we as human beings are more reactive, rather than proactive? Asking myself this question, I came to the conclusion that empowerment and mobilization of young Roma is strongly based on ownership. Allowing young people to brainstorm and be the owners over their ideas creates proactiveness.

The young people from Turkey felt what it means to be assertive and as such they have become active citizens by addressing the most sensitive topics of their communities in front of the authorities and the society.

My role in the whole process was that of a guide and observer that helped the creation of TRY (Turkish Roma Youth network).

Team-Building

Usually, people create teams when they noticed that it is impossible to reach some goals on their own. And then often, they pay more attention on the goal, than on what is going on inside the team. Not paying attention on what is happening inside the team, leads to not reaching the goal or the team to fall apart, by having members leaving.

When, I started to work with the youth from Edirne and later with the youth from Dikili, this is exactly the things I noticed. The leaders of the teams were so much concentrated on the goal to create a group that will work and perform, that they were forgetting on what is going on inside, among their teams-mates. And that people were joining and leaving the group, whenever they wanted to and in this way hindering the performance of the whole team. This could be noticed, while the group of Edirne was preparing their activity plan. There were too many individuals and too many ideas, but no core-team to decide upon which would be the priorities, because there was no constant team.

Building and having a good team is very important. In order to have and be part of a good team you must build one. You will join a good team for sure, but you will be not aware of it unless you don't work and build it up. But, is the process of team-building just one person's responsibility?

No, there must be an awareness of unity on this part from all its members. Interpersonal relationships must exist. Members must have a chance to contribute, learn from each other and work with others. The members must have the ability to act together towards a common goal.

Having an effective membership helps the performance of the team. I am glad that the Roma youth groups understood that:

All of them must contribute with ideas and solutions;

They must recognize and respect differences in others;

Value the ideas and contributions of others;

Listen and share information;

Ask questions and get clarification;

Participate fully and keep their commitments;

Have fun and care about the team and the outcomes.

The Challenge model as a tool

Vilfredo Pareto explained that 80 percent of your outcomes come from 20 percent of your inputs. Modifying it a bit to our needs, we would have:

100% Success made of 80% planning and 20% work

While working with the Roma youth groups, some of the things I tried to explain was how can we achieve much more with much less effort, time, and resources, simply by identifying and focusing our efforts on the 20 percent that really counts.

One of the models I offered is the so called Challenge model. This model offers the opportunity to go through whole stages of planning in order to identify and focus on the priority areas of work. *Although, this model is use as a health service model, I would recommend its use, while working with youth groups that are in the very beginning of creation.*

The Challenge Model is a simple learning tool for teams to use in order to address real challenges and achieve results. Beginning with creating a shared vision, the Challenge Model creates motivation and commitment within teams enabling them to face their challenges and achieve results.

The Challenge Model helps you create the path to the result by focusing on one challenge at a time: if this is our organization's mission and this is our vision, then this is one result that will get us closer to the vision. Next, given the current reality, these are the obstacles we need to overcome, and here is how we plan to go about it. Your success in facing each challenge inspires your team to apply the process repeatedly with new challenges to keep moving toward the vision.

The Challenge Model

Mission

Vision

Measurable result:

_____

Priority
actions

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Obstacles and
root causes

Current situation:

_____

Challenge:

_____

[How will we achieve our desired result in light of the obstacles we need to overcome?]

Knowing your group and the needs

Knowing your group and what is around you is also very important, especially if you are trying to mobilize your community to participate in the activity you are planning to do.

For example, the youth from Hatay combined football, research and debate. Why? Well, because football was the tool that helped mobilizing the youth from this community. This gives us a hint that they knew their group and how to trigger the young people to join them. The reason for combining it with research and debate was to address the problems they face every day. In this way, they were not just playing football against each other, but doing research and collecting data on specific topics from their community, debating and presenting it in front of the authorities. The interesting thing was that each team was named after a problem the young people from this community were facing, such as drugs, alcohols, smoking, early marriages, domestic violence etc. And based on the problem, each team was doing its research.

Sharing this example with you is to show you that you don't have to re-invent the wheel in order to attract young people to join you. Just look into your community and you will find the tool to attract their attention.

If, we want to address the needs of our group through a project or activity, it is important for us to keep in mind:

- Why is this needed? Are the groups' needs reflected in it?

- What are the opportunities in it?
- Does the group want it?
- Is someone else doing it?
- What is innovative in it?
- What is going to be the change?
- Does it involve the broader public and key persons?

Creativity

Another important thing, while working with young people is using their energy and creativity. Simple by making stuff up, unique to your group!

One thing we must be aware of is that when trying to think creatively, there is the risk that we will start to day-dream.

For example the youth from Edirne was spending a lot of time into discussing details that are not really relevant to the actions. This can sometimes cause the lack of motivation to do things. They were thinking about their community and actions in a very detailed way, but without acting. It is good for a group to be thinking about details for their actions, but it is bad not to implement and try things, but just sticking to the theory.

When we day-dream, for most of the part, we are entertaining our selves. But, when we think creatively, we get actually tired. *So, it is really important to know when our mind switches from creative thinking into day-dreaming!*

Brainstorming is one of the techniques of creativity. As Linus Pauling said: *The best way to come to a good idea is to have a*

lot of ideas! Brainstorming is doing exactly this, by generating a lot of ideas. But, we must be aware that they are certain rules that must to be followed while we brainstorm.

On the training about creativity and campaigning, I explained to the groups that they are 4 directions that must be followed while using a tool such as brainstorming.

1. NO critics! – critiquing any idea is forbidden.
2. NO evaluation of the idea! – In the phase of developing the idea, there should be no evaluation or judgement at all. "THE CRAZIER IT IS, THE BETTER!"
3. Generate a quantity of ideas! – The essence of the brainstorming is to generate as many ideas as possible. Quantity before quality!
4. Crossing the ideas! – combine and modify any of the ideas that have been created. Don't claim ownership of some idea. The ownership must be collective.

But, one of the most important rules that the Roma youth understood was that they must always think out of the box!

Five stages of group development

Each group or team goes through a whole set of processes during the phase of creation. Although, these processes and developments are hard to recognize sometimes, we must be aware of them.

The groups from Edirne, Hatay and Dikili passed partially through those processes and a big challenge is yet to come!

But, let's have a look in the stages of development each group has to pass. There are five stages: Forming, Storming, Norming, Performing and Adjournment. *In order to avoid the fifth stage and the regrets after departing, I suggest another stage called Trending.*
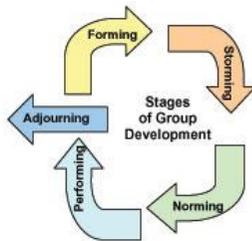
Each development starts with the phase of Forming. Forming is the stage when team members become acquainted with one another. They also assess the group task and the ground rules that will apply to that task. At this stage everyone is typically very polite and willing to go along with suggestions made by other team members. Team members try to avoid making

enemies and are frequently more patient with one another than they might be later in the process.

As the novelty of being a member of the team wears off, conflict emerges. **This means the phase of storming as begun.** Members of the team emerge who want to exert greater influence over the process. Leadership struggles begin, as do interpersonal conflicts. Conflicts erupt over the task requirements and the best way to achieve that task. This is the stage at which listening and finding mutually acceptable resolutions to the conflict is most important. The team can either emerge united and ready to take on the assigned task, or divided, with some members taking a passive role.

In the norming stage team members make an effort to discover what standards of performance are acceptable. What do deadlines really mean? How high a level of quality is necessary? Does every member have to be at every meeting? What about developing sub-teams? If the team can establish harmonious relationships at this stage, they are ready to move on to the performing stage. Some teams, however, disband at this stage. *I must admit, that the leader of the group that came from Dikili, did not manage to follow up with the dynamics that occurred at this stage. Unfortunately, some of the Roma youth*

from this group left the core group, allowing other more active youth to take their place.

At the stage of performing the team is ready to be productive and work on the task assigned. Team members' roles have been established and clarified. Group interaction should be relatively smooth as the team applies some of the problem-solving skills it learned in earlier stages to the task at hand. If the team has reached this stage without successfully working through the problems and issues of the earlier stages, it may disband or regress and work through those issues. *The groups from Edirne, Hatay, Dikili (Izmir) entered this stage. This stage as such represents one of the most difficult one to manage. Without proper channels of communication, the whole group might start the whole process of development from all over again, without being aware of it. Asking questions and getting clarifications, as well fully and active participation are number one priorities at this stage!*

At some point almost all teams are disbanded, whether their task is completed or a team member leaves. On the one hand this can be a happy stage, with members congratulating one another on a job well done. **On the other hand adjournment means the disruption of working arrangements that may have**

become comfortable and efficient, and possibly the end of friendships. But, this doesn't have to be the case with YOUR group!

Something I was trying to explain to the Roma youth group was that the fifth stage can be avoided by simple trending! What I mean with the trending is following the latest developments in the society around you. Analyzing, monitoring and evaluation are a must do in this stage. The importance of this stage compiles with the challenge model very well. Because, while you doing your primary tasks to reach your primary objective, a new challenge can arise. And by appointing team members to do the trending, you can always follow up on actual happenings in society. In other words, this stage is a simple M&E (monitoring and evaluation).

The Turkish Roma youth network yet must pass the stage of performing, in order to reach this stage.

We must be aware that each of the three groups passed the five stages of development by themselves. Linking themselves in a network was the fifth stage that occurred spontaneously and now the process started for them as a network. We see that the five stages of development can be applicable to networking as well, because those stages are representing the dynamics within a group.

Closure

In order to have active young Roma, we must understand that they are here among us and are part of today! Not tomorrow! It is wrong to plan and put hopes and dreams about the young people of tomorrow, when we have them right here among us. Young people must be part and participate in the plans we are making. Today!

ERGO with the support of the MATRA program believes in the Roma youth of today. An example for this are the young people that belong to the Turkish Roma youth network. Supporting and giving opportunities for development creates young active citizens. In order to create effective Turkish Roma youth groups with strong conceptual understanding of youth empowerment and mobilization, I divided the work into two areas:

1. Capacity building (organizational and personal)
2. Roma youth, society and problem solving

While building their capacity, Roma youth became aware of the society around them and how to address the problems that bothers their communities in Turkey.

For me personal, the youth represent the best scanner for detecting the real issues that exists within the Roma Community and Society. With some guidance they can detect the root of the problem and build their way up to find a permanent solution to get rid of the root of the problem.

But, of course in order to achieve this we need support and understanding, because being young and Roma is not an easy role!