

**Summative Report –
RoW-Power
Cooperation
Workshops**



Enhancing support for Roma women victims of GBV



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Introduction

The RoW-POWER project has successfully concluded the Counseling-Workshops (Activities A4.3 - A4.8). Through targeted awareness campaigns, accessible information materials, Info-Workshops, and Counseling-Workshops, the project builds shared understanding, and guides Roma women towards appropriate services. Between June and December 2025, partners organized 12 Counseling & Empowerment Workshops across participating countries to empower Roma women to protect themselves, to provide practical support, and to build the capacity of GBV professionals and Roma mediators to work effectively in intercultural contexts.

1. Project Background and Workshop Structure and Format Workshop Implementation

These sessions were a huge step in strengthening collaboration between Roma women and GBV professionals, alongside fostering deeper cultural understanding, which led to better-skilled staff when addressing the challenges and specific backgrounds of Roma women affected directly or indirectly by gender-based violence.

The overarching mission of the RoW-POWER project is to train and specialise two key professional groups: Roma mediators of various specialties and GBV professionals. This specialization is necessary to equip Roma mediators with



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the knowledge to encourage and direct Roma women towards appropriate GBV reporting and support services. In parallel, WP4 activities strengthen this mission by addressing the challenges, fears, and lack of trust Roma women face when seeking help. Through targeted awareness-raising campaigns, culturally and linguistically adapted information materials, and both Info-Workshops and Counseling and Empowerment Workshops, the project enhances shared understanding, builds trust, and raises awareness of Roma women's rights and protections. These efforts ensure that Roma women are not only informed about GBV and their rights but are also supported in accessing services for complaints, counseling, and long-term protection.

As a result, a total of 12 Counseling and Empowerment Workshops were organised (two per country), each engaging 20 Roma women with the support of trained Roma facilitators in each country. The workshops were mainly focused on gender-based violence (GBV), strengthening women's knowledge of their rights and how to protect themselves, or how to reach for help when they are no longer able to protect themselves.

Additionally, within the WP4, promotional materials were produced:

- Info brochure: <https://row-power-project.eu/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/En-8.pdf>
- Promotional Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y9B9hEcZiwA>

These materials have fostered the knowledge and raised the awareness regarding the gender based violence topic among the participants. Participants reacted positively and appreciated the materials, both in German and Romani.

Workshop Structure and Format

The structure of the Info workshop was divided into three distinct sessions or thematic segments. These sessions typically focused on: 1) GBV what is Gender-Based Violence; 2) Roma Women's Rights under National and EU law, and 3) Mapping Local Support Services: collaborative activity to identify



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hotlines, shelters, legal aid, and healthcare providers. To maximise participation and reduce implementation costs, these workshops were conducted mainly face-to-face (F2F). This flexibility was crucial for ensuring a balanced and inclusive participation and accommodating the geographical and scheduling needs of participants.

1. Key Insights and National Findings

The national workshop reports provided crucial data regarding vulnerabilities, knowledge gaps, and the agreed-upon role of the Roma Mediator across the diverse European contexts.

Ireland

Description of the testing process

The Counselling & Empowerment Workshops in Cavan, Ireland (November 17th and 20th 2025) were facilitated by GBV professionals trained through the project's WP3 pilot, ensuring expertise in both technical knowledge and intercultural competencies. Recruitment was carried out via community referrals, with NGOs, social workers, and women's support services identifying survivors of GBV and women at high risk. Participation was voluntary, with confidentiality emphasized to create a safe and supportive environment.

A total of female participants, primarily aged between 25 and 50, attended. They represented a mix of survivors and women considered at risk, drawn from both Roma communities and the Irish Travelling community. The professionals leading the sessions specialized in gender-based violence counseling and empowerment, and were affiliated with local NGOs and support organizations.



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Results of the Counseling Workshop/s

It was very difficult to convince women to join the workshops, requiring weeks of talks and negotiations due to the sensitive topic of gender-based violence. Many expressed mistrust of outsiders and fears for their safety and that of their children. Attendance was only agreed under strict conditions: no photos, no participant lists, and no contact details, as breaches of privacy could have life-threatening consequences. Participants stressed that names, photos, or personal stories could endanger them if shared, so anonymous note-taking and avoiding group disclosure were seen as essential safeguards.

While storytelling helped women feel less alone, many feared their words being repeated outside the room. The environment was described as positive, with respect and privacy rules creating safety, but most preferred listening over speaking and asked for more anonymous activities, one-to-one sessions, and general discussions without personal disclosure. Sharing trauma was seen as overwhelming without strong follow-up support. Accessibility challenges also appeared, with some needing help to complete surveys and others struggling with complex questions. The talk on rights was appreciated, though participants requested simpler language and relatable examples.

Feedback revealed deep mistrust of services, with many reporting past experiences of being judged or poorly treated, receiving limited help that forced them back into unsafe situations. Although information about services was useful, participants expressed fear of authorities such as the guards and Túsla.

Lessons Learned and Takeaways

The workshops were well received once clear rules on respect, privacy, and confidentiality were set, helping participants feel safe and willing to engage. Trust was built through opening sessions that emphasized privacy, while discussions on rights were valued when delivered simply and with relatable examples. Storytelling fostered connection but only worked when anonymity



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was ensured. Information on services gave women a clearer sense of their options, and stress management activities were especially appreciated for offering practical coping strategies.

Convincing women to attend required weeks of negotiation due to the sensitive nature of gender-based violence. Many feared for their safety and agreed only under strict conditions—no photos, lists, or contact details—which protected them but complicated organization. Communication barriers also emerged, with literacy challenges and confusion over survey questions. Engagement was limited by fear of disclosure, with many preferring to listen rather than share.

Past negative experiences with services deepened mistrust, underscoring the need for trauma-informed methods, simpler communication, and stronger follow-up support to ensure safety and meaningful participation.

Greece

Description of the testing process

The workshops took place in 3 different dates and places in Attica. The first one took place on the 4th of December in Chalandri with 3 Roma women, in a café close but not too close to the area of residence, so they could speak freely. The second one took place on the 9th of December in Santa Barbara, Athens, with the participation of 4 Roma women at the house of one of them. The third one took place on the 11th of December, in Aspropyrgos with the participation of 3 Roma women, in the house of one of the participants. All 3 were framed by one (1) GBV Professional who is working in the Athens polycenter GBV Reporting center and two (2) Roma Mediators.

Participants were recruited with the support of Roma mediators working in Roma Branches, who provide daily assistance to Roma citizens across all aspects of their lives. Additional support was provided by the Greek Roma Mediators Association.

A total of 10 participants took part in the workshops. All participants were female, with ages ranging from 20 to 80 years. Those who were employed worked as private-sector employees, mainly in cleaning services or as sales assistants. Only two participants had completed lower secondary education (gymnasium).



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All three sessions were conducted in the afternoon and lasted approximately three hours each. An indicative agenda was developed for the sessions; however, it was followed only partially. Although all thematic sections were covered, participants chose not to engage extensively in personal storytelling or the sharing of individual experiences. As a result, the empowerment and reflection components were addressed more briefly than initially planned. In contrast, greater emphasis was placed on practical information, including coping strategies, trauma awareness, and guidance on available local support services, which participants considered more relevant to their immediate needs. The flexibility in agenda implementation allowed the sessions to respect participants' boundaries while remaining responsive to their priorities.

Results of the Info Workshop/s

For confidentiality reasons and to ensure a safe and trusted environment, evaluation questionnaires were completed in printed form on-site, without the use of online tools. All 10 participants completed the evaluation. The quantitative results showed consistently positive feedback across all criteria. Concerning *Workshop Organization and Overall Assessment*, all participants agreed or strongly agreed that the workshops were well-organized, clearly presented, and relevant to their needs, with no negative responses recorded. In *Quality of Discussions*, participants expressed very high satisfaction with the structure, usefulness, and relevance of discussions, highlighting that the format encouraged active participation without pressure to share personal experiences.

Qualitative feedback further confirmed the high level of satisfaction. Most participants indicated that they would not change anything in the workshop format, valuing the practical and coherent information provided. Participants also appreciated the respectful and non-intrusive approach, especially the fact that personal storytelling was not obligatory.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the workshops were perceived as clear, supportive, and emotionally safe.

Lessons Learned and Takeaways

The workshops were positively received by participants, who particularly appreciated the clear structure, the practical and accessible information, and the supportive role of GBV professionals and Roma mediators. The safe and respectful environment allowed



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participants to engage comfortably, without feeling pressured to share personal experiences. Overall, the format was considered relevant, understandable, and responsive to participants' needs. No communication or logistical challenges were encountered. However, it is acknowledged that for Roma women participants—as for many women in general—it can be difficult to open up quickly and discuss personal issues in a group setting with unfamiliar individuals. The workshop design respected these boundaries by allowing participants to engage without obligation to disclose personal information.

Based on participant feedback and implementation experience, the overall format and content of the empowerment workshops should be maintained. Such actions are valuable and well received; however, time and continuity are essential for meaningful impact. Empowerment and trust-building cannot be achieved through one-off interventions.

Future implementation would benefit from ongoing and coordinated collaboration between Roma mediators and professionals working on gender-based violence, as well as from the provision of continuous support mechanisms for Roma women who are survivors or at risk of gender-based violence. Sustained engagement over time can strengthen trust, improve access to services, and enhance the long-term effectiveness of such initiatives.

Germany

Description of the testing process

The German Counseling and Empowerment workshop directed by IRMI took place during October and December 2025 in 4 events, in Wuppertal, Germany , with 20 Roma Women. The recruiting process was carried out in close cooperation with the Roma Integration Center and the Network to Combat Antigypsyism.

The half-day Counseling and Empowerment Workshop began with a warm welcome and an icebreaker to help participants feel at ease. The first session focused on empowerment through guided storytelling. Roma women shared personal experiences and strengths in a supportive circle, reinforcing their



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rights and resilience. This was followed by a trauma awareness segment led by GBV professionals, who introduced practical coping strategies and everyday self-care tools. After a short break, participants joined small group discussions facilitated by mediators and professionals. These intimate spaces allowed for experience-sharing, peer validation, and mutual learning. The workshop continued with a presentation on local support services, including shelters, helplines, legal aid, and health resources, complemented by printed guides for future reference. To close the day, participants gathered for a reflection circle, offering feedback and identifying personal takeaways. Clear signposting was provided for follow-up support and referrals, ensuring that each woman left with strengthened awareness and a pathway toward empowerment.



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Results of the Info Workshop

The most significant aspect of the workshop was its inclusive format and clear communication, which was also confirmed by the respondents. Namely, a total of 65% of respondents strongly agreed, while 35% agreed that the workshop successfully fulfilled its aims, suggesting that the agenda was clearly communicated and effectively implemented. This clarity was complemented by a high level of interactivity: 70% strongly agreed, and 30% agreed that the discussions were engaging and valuable. They also reflected a strong collective belief in the project's capacity to drive change and provide lasting support. Engagement levels remained high throughout the workshop. In the final evaluation question, 75% of participants strongly agreed and 25% agreed that they were able to actively participate in the conversation.

From this workshop, we stressed these key insights:

- 1) Inclusive Participation Shifted Perceptions and
- 2) Safe, Interactive Methods Fostered Openness.

* The "Empowerment storytelling and sharing circle" activity created a safe space for the participants, also allowing them to voice out.

Lessons Learned and Takeaways

Taking into consideration that among the participants we could have potential direct or indirect victims and/or women at risk of gender-based violence, the most important thing was creating a safe space for all participants, from the very beginning to the very end of the workshops. For instance, the progression of 'Guided storytelling and sharing circle session' to the session aimed at covering signs of trauma, emotional grounding techniques, and tools for daily self-care. Thanks to this structure, we were able to achieve goals for the Counseling workshops.



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A key highlight was the collaboration among gender-based violence professionals and the Roma mediators. The women noted that the lack of Roma professionals often means a lack of support to create a safe space, and this time, that was not the case. Through empowerment exercises, Roma women are better equipped and feel readiness to face tough challenges

North Macedonia

Description of the testing process

With in these activity RRC have realized 2 workshops for Counseling & Empowerment Workshops with Roma Woman, 1 in Prilep, 1 in Skopje(Shuto Orizari). The process of recruiting participants for this workshop on awareness raising and empowerment of Roma women, which was held in Prilep, was done in joint cooperation between RRC Skopje and NGO Roma Perspektiv from Prilep, NGO organization that has been working with the Roma community from Prilep for more than 10 years. In Skopje also we have mutual cooperation with Association Initiative for Women's Rights from Shuto Orizari, CSO which already work on the same topic, and also have experience on working with GBV in the Roma community in Shuto Orizari. At the same time, the contacts that the participants Roma Mediators from Prilep and Skopje, already were used to recruit participants as well. The participation of the participants in the workshop was on a voluntary basis, and all participants filled out Consent Forms. The participants of the workshop were reminded at the beginning that everything that would be discussed and discussed at the workshop was with confidentiality emphasized throughout in order to create a safe and supportive environment.

All participants were female(18 participants in Prilep, and 17 participnats in Skopje in Shuto Orizari), primarily aged between 18 and 40 years. In terms of the profile of the participants, all were Roma women from the Roma Community of the Municipality of Prilep,and Skopje. Main of the participants were with completed primary and secondary education(lower education). There were also 5(2 in Skopje, 3 in Prilep)



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participants in their final year of university. In terms of Profession, the majority of the participants worked in a factory, a profession with low vocational training; some were housewives, and a few were university students.

The workshop in Prilep was held on November 21, 2025, starting at 10 am, and lasted 4 hours and 30 minutes. It was held, at the premises of Roma Perspective (In Roma Community) in F2F format. 5 Mediators and 1 Professional for GBV led the workshop in coordination with the RRC team.

The workshop in Skopje (Shuto Orizari) was held on December 30, 2025, starting at 10 am, and lasted 4 hours. It was held at the premises of the Association Initiative for Women's Rights from Shuto Orizari in F2F format. 5 Mediators and 1 Professional for GBV led the workshop in coordination with the RRC team.

During the implementation of the workshops, special care was taken to ensure a safe, protected environment, where privacy would be respected and ensured, in order not to put the participants in danger, given that GBV as a topic is very sensitive.



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- Timing and structure of the sessions

Regarding the timing and the structure of the sessions in the both workshops, when we developed sessions in coordination with the Roma Mediators and Professionals, we used the proposed agenda by adapting and choosing the topics that need of our Roma woman community, taking into account their needs and the time they can afford to participate.

In the section on the structure of the agenda, it consists of several Sessions, namely:



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- 1 Session for welcome to the workshop, Introductions, agenda walkthrough, confidentiality agreement, and emotional safety guidelines.
- 2 Session: Empowerment and Guided storytelling and sharing circle focusing on personal strengths, rights, and resilience.
- 3 Session: Strategies & Trauma Awareness
- 4 Session for Group Discussions facilitated by mediators; space for experience-sharing, validation, and peer learning.

Results of the Info Workshop/s

Because the topic GBV it is sensitive for the Roma Women to participate in the workshops it was challenging due to the sensitive nature of gender-based violence (GBV), and it was required weeks of discussions the timing for realization. Many expressed mistrust of outsiders and concerns for their own and their children's safety. Anonymous methods, such as writing thoughts without names and avoiding group sharing, were essential safeguards. Storytelling helped reduce isolation, but many feared harm if their words were shared outside the room. The workshop environment was generally positive, with privacy and respect rules helping participants feel safe. However, many preferred listening over speaking and requested more anonymous activities, one-to-one sessions, and general discussions without personal disclosure. Sharing trauma was seen as potentially overwhelming without strong follow-up support. Accessibility challenges arose, including literacy difficulties and comprehension issues. Discussions about rights were valued, but participants requested simpler language and practical examples from women with similar experiences. Feedback revealed deep mistrust of services, with many reporting past judgment or poor treatment that sometimes forced them back into unsafe situations. While information about services was helpful. Also, fear of authorities, Police, Center for Social Affairs and Public Prosecutor's Office that they will not act as institutions, and remained significant.



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Lessons Learned and Takeaways

Challenges and Obstacles Encountered The workshops were most effective when clear rules on respect, privacy, and confidentiality were established from the outset. These principles helped create a safe environment and encouraged participation. Introductory sessions that strongly emphasised confidentiality and privacy protections played a key role in building trust. Discussions on rights were well received, particularly when delivered in simple, accessible language and supported by practical, real-life examples. Storytelling was recognised as a valuable tool for fostering connection and reducing isolation, but only when anonymity was fully guaranteed. Providing information about available support services was also beneficial, as it helped participants better understand their options. In addition, stress management activities were especially appreciated, as they offered practical coping strategies and helped participants feel calmer and more supported during the sessions. Overall, approaches that prioritised anonymity, respected personal boundaries, and included supportive elements such as stress management proved to be the most effective. Despite these positive aspects, significant challenges were encountered in recruiting participants due to the sensitive nature of gender-based violence. Building trust required weeks of dialogue and reassurance. Many women expressed strong mistrust of outsiders and concerns for their own safety and that of their children. Participation was only possible under strict conditions, including no photographs, no attendance lists, and no collection of contact details. While these measures were essential for protecting participants, they created logistical challenges related to organisation and follow-up. Additional communication barriers were identified during implementation. Some participants faced literacy challenges and required assistance to complete surveys, while others found certain questions difficult to understand. Engagement was further limited by fear of disclosure, with many women preferring to listen rather than speak and avoiding group sharing. Previous negative experiences with support services also contributed to low levels of trust, as participants reported feeling judged or inadequately supported in the past. These challenges underline the importance of trauma-informed



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approaches, simplified communication, and strengthened post-workshop support mechanisms to ensure both safety and meaningful engagement.

Slovakia

Description of the testing process

The recruitment process for the Counseling and Empowerment Workshops was carried out in close collaboration with social workers and community networks. Outreach efforts included engagement with asylum service providers and women's centers, which offer safe spaces for Roma women experiencing Gender-Based Violence (GBV).

On October 21st and 28th, Topcoach hosted two Counseling and Empowerment Workshops at its office premises located at Karpatské námestie 10/A, 83106 Bratislava, Slovakia.

Topcoach representatives conducted in-person visits to these entities to establish trust, strengthen cooperation, and ensure that appropriate safeguarding measures were in place ahead of the upcoming workshops. These visits were essential in building confidence among stakeholders and creating a supportive environment for participants.

In parallel, GBV counselors and other relevant professionals were informed about the workshops and invited to be present during the piloting phase of the WP3 Training for GBV. Professionals, fostering coordination, professional exchange, and continuity of support for the women involved.

The workshops were attended by 20 Roma women, aged between 30 and 55 years, who had either personally experienced Gender-Based Violence (GBV) or had been affected through experiences within their community. The sessions



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provided a safe and supportive environment for sharing experiences, strengthening resilience, and accessing guidance.

In addition, five GBV professionals who had previously been trained during the WP3

Piloting phase participated in the workshops. Their presence ensured professional support, facilitated structured discussions, and contributed to the integration of practical knowledge gained during the training into real-life community engagement.

Results of the Info Workshop/s

The results indicate a strong positive perception of the discussions. A majority of participants (60%) strongly agreed that the information retrieved during the sessions significantly contributed to increasing their relevant knowledge. This high level of agreement reflects the effectiveness of the discussions in enhancing participants' understanding of key issues related to supporting Roma women and addressing Gender-Based Violence. It also demonstrates that the exchange of information created a valuable learning environment that promoted awareness, knowledge acquisition, and practical insight into the topic.

The findings show that over 70% of participants in Slovakia believe that the RoW POWER project can have a significant impact on enhancing support for Roma women victims of Gender-Based Violence (GBV). This strong level of agreement reflects confidence in the project's approach, objectives, and potential outcomes.

Participants recognize that the project can contribute to improving counselling services, strengthening support mechanisms, and increasing awareness among professionals working with Roma women. The results suggest that the RoW POWER initiative is perceived as a meaningful and effective intervention that can positively influence the protection, empowerment, and social inclusion of Roma women affected by GBV.

Lessons Learned and Takeaways

The Counseling and Info-Workshop for Roma women and GBV professionals demonstrated several strong and effective elements.

First, the structured opening session (“Welcome and Setting the Space”) was essential in establishing emotional safety and trust. Clearly outlining confidentiality principles, respectful communication rules, and emotional safety guidelines created a secure environment for participants to engage in a sensitive topic such as Gender-Based Violence(GBV). The Empowerment Session, particularly the guided storytelling and sharing circle, was highly effective. By focusing on personal strengths, rights, and resilience rather than solely on victimization, the session promoted a sense of agency and dignity. Participants responded positively to the strengths-based approach and appreciated the opportunity to be heard in a respectful setting.

The Trauma Awareness and Coping Strategies session led by GBV professionals was also very well received. Practical tools such as grounding techniques, emotional regulation strategies, and daily self-care methods were considered useful and applicable in everyday life. The presence of trained professionals increased credibility and ensured that discussions remained trauma-informed and supportive.

Small group discussions facilitated by mediators and professionals created safer micro-spaces for deeper sharing. Participants who were more reserved in plenary sessions were more comfortable contributing in smaller groups, strengthening peer support and mutual validation.

Finally, the presentation of local support services and distribution of printed guides provided tangible, practical value. Clear signposting and the final reflection circle ensured that participants left informed, supported, and aware of further assistance options.

Given the sensitive nature of counseling for Roma women potentially affected by GBV, several challenges were identified.



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Emotional sensitivity was a primary challenge. Discussions around trauma and violence triggered strong emotions for some participants. This was managed by allowing flexibility (participants could step out if needed), providing immediate professional support, and integrating grounding techniques. However, future workshops could include additional structured emotional check-ins to further strengthen containment. Initial trust and confidentiality concerns were also observed. Some participants were hesitant to openly share experiences, particularly in the presence of professionals. Transparent communication about confidentiality, ethical standards, and the purpose of professional involvement helped reduce this hesitation. Continued community-based trust-building prior to such events would further improve engagement. Cultural and communication barriers emerged in relation to terminology and institutional language. Facilitators addressed this by simplifying language and relying on mediators familiar with the Roma community. Future improvements could include more culturally adapted and visual materials. Time management presented a minor challenge. The depth of sharing during storytelling and small group discussions occasionally required flexibility in the agenda. While this reflected strong engagement, slightly extended session time or additional breaks could improve pacing in future workshops.

Spain

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Description of the testing process

- The recruiting process, description, and number of participants [gender, age, profession, professional specialty, organization **insert pictures**
- Timing and structure of the sessions



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Results of the Info Workshop/s

Lessons Learned and Takeaways

Achieving Project Impact

The Counseling and Empowerment workshops served as a foundation for developing the project's key outputs. The discussions successfully addressed the fundamental objectives that the RoW-POWER project sought to achieve:

We were therefore able to identify:

- Vulnerabilities and barriers Roma women face in accessing GBV support services.
- Knowledge gaps regarding GBV definitions, rights under national/EU law, and available protections.
- Challenges that limit Roma women's ability to engage with service providers;

From there on, we were able to enhance:

- Shared understanding of GBV as a community-spread issue, not only a Roma women's issue.
- Awareness among Roma women of their rights and possible ways to protection.
- Trust between Roma women and mediators through safe spaces, and culturally sensitive facilitation;

By the end of this project, we will achieve full circle of impact:



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- Strengthen collaboration between Roma mediators, GBV professionals, by fostering deeper cultural understanding, better-skilled staff when facing the challenges and specific cultural background of Roma women, directly or non-directly affected by gender-based violence.
- Reaching to Roma communities by involving women and men in dialogue and case studies.
- Provided support reporting and counseling services to Roma women who have been at risk of GBV
- Across partner countries, through the coordinated implementation of 12 workshops total of 120 participants were reached, ensuring consistency and shared learning.

ROW-POWER

Enhancing support for Roma women victims of GBV



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