



United Nations Development Programme

Communications Office

PRESS RELEASE

UNDP TO HONOUR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT REPORT ON THE ROMA OF EUROPE

Regional Award for “Excellence in Policy Impact” to be Presented in New York; First-Ever Household Survey of Roma Reveals Daunting Challenges to Development

NEW YORK – 15 December, 2004 -- A groundbreaking Report on the plight of the Roma will be honoured by the United Nations Development Programme at a special ceremony in New York City on 15 December, 2004. The Report, *Roma in Central and Eastern Europe 2002 -- Avoiding the Dependency Trap*; is this year’s winner of the “Excellence in Policy Impact Award,” one of the seven 2004 UNDP Awards for Human Development selected by a panel of distinguished independent judges. The award will be presented by **Laszlo Teleki**, Hungarian State Secretary for Roma Affairs, to **Andrey Ivanov**, lead author of the Report.

Never before has such comprehensive documentation been compiled about Roma living in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia, and their struggle to survive in societies where discrimination and obstacles to advancement remain daunting. This struggle has drawn the Roma into a “dependency trap,” the Report surmises, in which chronic hunger, poverty, unemployment and inadequate education conspire to keep their living standard and opportunities well below those of the countries they call home.

Indeed, the authors found in this first-ever survey of Roma households (more than 5,000 interviews were conducted), Roma constitute “third world” constituencies living within the framework of industrial societies. Their level of human development is closer to that of Sub-Saharan Africa, in terms of literacy, infant mortality and nutrition, even though most Roma now live in EU-member countries.

The marginalisation is palpable. Only 6% of Roma children surveyed had completed secondary education, only 1% had attended college. The Report warns that the cost of this marginalisation—in terms of the potential for political extremism, setbacks to democracy and the human cost of lost opportunities-- could spiral. It advocates the urgent need to integrate Roma into society, beginning with non-segregated schools, an end to job training and employment discrimination, and greater participation by Roma in local government. The Roma, it concludes, desire to integrate, rather than assimilate.

A Lasting Impact

“The Report’s major impact is its **influence on public debate** around Roma issues,” said Andrey Ivanov, the Report’s lead author. “It has already received **record-breaking media coverage**, gaining over 200 mentions in the media in the first month after the launch.” The Report likewise promoted the novel idea that human development is a relevant issue even in developed economies.

The Report also helped UNDP officials in Bulgaria and Romania to **mobilise substantial resources** from those governments for projects targeting Roma. The European Commission Delegation in Sofia used the Report's data to prepare its own Report on the status of Roma. Perhaps most importantly, after the Report's release, the World Bank announced a human development initiative called "**Decade of Roma Inclusion**," something that was explicitly advocated in the Report.

The other winners of this year's UNDP Human Development Awards are: **West Bengal Sub-National Report 2004**: "Land Reform and Decentralisation;" **Latvia 2002/2003**: "Human Security;" **Zambia 2003**: "Eradication of Extreme Poverty and Hunger;" **Colombia Report 2003**: "The Conflict, A Way Out;" and **Argentina Report 2002**: "Contributions to Human Development." The **Mahbub ul Haq Award for Outstanding Contribution to Human Development** will be presented to **Mr. Fazole Hasan Abed**, founder of the BRAC organisation in Bangladesh. BRAC has continued its success in advancing food security, health, education and micro-finance, disbursing some \$2 billion to the landless, the rural poor and others with no collateral, with a 98% repayment rate.

Final selections were made by eminent scholars including Mahnaz Afkhami, President, Women's Learning Partnership and former Minister of State for Women's Affairs in Iran; Princess Basma Bint Talal of Jordan; Kwesi Botchwey, Executive Chairman, African Development Policy Ownership Initiative, and former Minister of Finance in Ghana; and Moisés Naím, Editor, *Foreign Policy*.

"The goal of human development is to put people back at the centre of the development process," said **UNDP Administrator Mark Malloch Brown**, who will host the proceedings on 15 December, along with **Juju Chang**, the Emmy Award-winning correspondent for ABC News and "20/20" reporter. "It is about expanding choices for people, to enable them to enjoy long and healthy lives."

UNDP has helped more than 135 developing countries and five regions to produce their own national and regional Human Development Reports. These reports, written by local experts, spur public debate and bring political attention to pressing development needs. They propose concrete solutions to mobilise the resources, policies and political will to overcome poverty and bring about growth, equality, investment in people's basic needs, and freedom. They also help donor governments measure the impact of aid dollars.

UNDP is the global development network of the United Nations. UNDP advocates for change and connects countries to knowledge, experience and resources to help people build a better life. It is on the ground in 166 countries, working with people on their own solutions to global and national development challenges.

Additional information on the UNDP Awards for Human Development is available at <http://hdr.undp.org/aboutus/nhdr/awards/>. **For interview requests with Mr. Ivanov or Mr. Teleki, please contact David Kirby at 212-906-3693 or david.kirby@undp.org.**