

Follow-up topical discussion at Delcevo

On 18th June, 2008, a discussion on the topic *Consequences from underage marriages within Roma population* was held in Delcevo, as follow-up of the public debate held in 2007. The aim of the discussion was to raise awareness of the Roma population about consequences from underage marriages from judicial, medical and social point of view. Total of 41 participants attended the discussion: representatives of the local government, NGOs and citizens from Delcevo and Pehcevo.

Introductory speeches were given by: Mirjanka Trancevska – lawyer on the topic *Law regulation for underage marriages and required documentation for marriage, divorce and alimony*, Vojo Atanasov, medical specialist – gynecologist, on the topic *Consequences from early pregnancy, contraception methods for young population and the meaning of the PAP-test* and Desa Hristova - Center for Social Work, Delcevo, on the topic *Problems in young families*.

Discussion ended with the following main findings:

- low level of education, as well as tradition of the older Roma population are the reasons for the appearance of underage marriages;
- bad economic situation results in a large number of extramarital communities, as well as in a large number of married couples living separately, because they don't have enough finances to pay the costs for marriage or divorce;
- large number of Roma girls get married because of being pregnant and women who perform abortion in illegal manner;
- there is a need for better education on issues like contraception and sexually transmittable diseases;
- better cooperation with the Center for Social Work and educational institutions should be established.

The Foundation Open Society Institute - Macedonia realized the discussion in cooperation with NGO Support Center Delcevo.