

FRIENDS OF ROMANO LAV ANNUAL REPORT

2019-2020



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Welcome! Friends of Romano Lav Message from the Trustees

We would like to warmly welcome you to Friends of Romano Lav's Annual Report for 2019-20. Please take a few moments to read through this report and reflect with us on what has been another very busy and productive year for the organisation. From International Roma Day to photography workshops and exhibitions - not to mention the many arts, music, and dance performances throughout! – our programme has been packed with a huge variety of events and activities. None of these activities would have been possible without the generous support of our funders, as acknowledged in this report, as well as the hard work of the Friends of Romano Lav team. 2019-20 has also been an exciting year of change and development for our team. As ever, we are indebted to our staff and particularly to our team of young sessional workers and the wider communities they represent for their enormous contributions to the project's development of this past year whose dedication and enthusiasm never fail to ensure that our events are a success. As Trustees, we would like to extend our thanks to everyone involved with Friends of Romano Lav and we look forward to an equally active and successful 2020-21.

Opre Roma!

Lorraine Barrie

Colin Clark

David Donaldson

Fatima Uygun

Jim Monaghan

Introduction

Empowering Roma youth

As a grassroots organisation steered by the voices of Roma communities, the principle of empowering Roma, and Roma youth, in particular, underpins all of our work. We operate through a grassroots form of organising; where all decisions are made horizontally. This is based on an ethos of equality, empowerment, mutual respect, and shared responsibility. All working relationships at Romano Lav are founded on these principles and, in turn, these principles filter through our streetwork when engaging with the wider Roma communities.

This year, we worked with our young people to put together a diverse, participatory, and youth-led programme including educational events and activities, artistic and cultural performances, workshops and exhibitions, and community celebrations.

The form of all of our activities is determined by dialogue with the young people. Our fortnightly Roma youth team meetings have two functions:

(1) To discuss key issues such as racism, discrimination, and other equalities issues, social justice, poverty, diversity, democracy, and the history of Roma culture and Roma pride, which are not only relevant to our work, but that also help the young people make sense of their own experiences as well as those of their wider communities,

(2) To steer our programme of work. We record and take notes from these discussions and use the ideas generated by our young people to shape and determine the direction of our activities. We develop mind maps of project ideas categorised according to theme. We then arrange focused discussions for each potential project idea to establish its viability and plan and divide up the necessary tasks to realise their projects. This helps to further their sense of ownership of their ideas.

Our youth-led bottom-up mode of community organising

This style of community engagement works very well for us as an organisation, ensuring that our work is also led by the concerns, interests, and perspectives of the wider Roma communities. By working in consultation with the communities through the streetwork carried

out by our youth team, we can ensure all Roma people locally feel like they have a stake in Romano Lav. Moreover, by acting as conduits between the community and the organisation, our young people gain important community development skills, including facilitation, but this in turn also furnishes them with transferable skills that they can use in other contexts and in other aspects of their lives. All of our activities and projects involve some degree of confidence-building and upskilling of our young people, however specific examples from this funded year's highlights include:

- Opre Roma! Start Up Grants
- CineRoma (The UK's first Roma Film Festival, and programmed by Roma youth)
- A Hero's Message - Raymond Gureme's visit to Scotland
- Dikh He Na Bister -Look and Don't Forget', an initiative to remember the Roma Genocide

Challenging misrepresentations and stereotypes

We are conscious that dominant representations of Roma culture in society (both locally and trans/nationally) consist of negative depictions and stereotypes that stigmatise the community. We are keen to challenge this through our work by facilitating opportunities for the Roma communities to represent themselves: exercising agency and taking control of their own representation whilst challenging stereotypes. We also create opportunities for non-Roma people to learn about Roma culture and better understand/appreciate these rich traditions. In turn, this fosters greater intercultural dialogue which can contribute to the forging and deepening of solidarities locally.

About Friends of Romano Lav

Context

Roma have been historically one of the most systematically oppressed and marginalised populations in Europe, subject to violence, persecution and discrimination. Despite often fleeing racist persecution, Roma continue to experience this legacy of oppression today, with discrimination and destitution exacerbating the everyday struggle to survive. Roma are Europe's largest minority and have been identified as its most vulnerable ethnic group. The extraordinary levels of poverty, discrimination, and inequalities in both opportunities and outcomes in employment, education, health and housing that Roma continue to face led to the establishment of the Decade of Roma Inclusion in 2005 (2005-2015), which aimed 'to close the gap' between Roma and non-Roma within ten years. Whilst this initiative raised the profile of the issues that Roma face, increased expertise, and made some incremental (if uneven) progress on particular outcomes, the efforts were insufficient to achieve the structural changes necessary to have a substantial impact on Romani lives.



Roma Voice

Friends of Romano Lav (SC044474) was established in 2013 and has worked as an independent SCIO since 2014 to challenge the racism, discrimination and disadvantage experienced by migrant Roma communities in Glasgow. The words 'Romano Lav' mean 'Roma voice', which reflects the key founding principle of our organisation and the continuing objective that underpins all of our work: to ensure that Romani people, especially youth, are involved as active agents in all decisions that affect their lives. Friends of Romano Lav exists then, not to speak for Roma, but to work with our local Roma communities to ensure that Romani voices are heard in all relevant local social, political, and cultural domains and that we are led by their concerns. We use community development as a tool to achieve the advancement of citizenship of Roma communities by involving them in decision-making processes, creating a sense of ownership, and increasing participation in community activities.

Where We Work: Govanhill

Friends of Romano Lav is based in Govanhill in Glasgow, where approximately 3500 of Scotland's total estimated 4000-5000 Roma reside (SM Gateway, 2013). The majority of Glasgow's Roma live in Govanhill, which is a neighbourhood in the South of Glasgow with a population estimate of 14,716, although this is thought to be an underestimate (Govanhill Regeneration Group, 2017). Govanhill has historically been a destination for new migrants, who have tended to form communities and settle. Whilst Glasgow's population is three times as diverse as the national level (with 12% of its residents identifying within minority categories, compared to 4% at the national level), Govanhill is ten times as diverse, with over one third (40%) of its residents from ethnic minority groups (Scottish Census 2011). Govanhill experiences a complex range of social and economic challenges and is considered one of the most deprived zones in Scotland. For example:

- Approximately 2,272 households in the Govanhill area are overcrowded, which is 24% of all households in the area. This increases to 34% for households with children, which is 88% above the Glasgow average (Govanhill Regeneration Group, 2017).
- Housing density, increasing population through migration, overcrowding and high levels of occupancy define Govanhill as one of the most densely populated areas in Glasgow (Crosshill and Govanhill Community Council, 2015).
- The population in Govanhill classified as income deprived is 24.5%, which is 14% above the Glasgow average, and 23% employment deprived, which is 16% above the Glasgow average (Understanding Glasgow, 2015). This rises to 42% in some areas (Clark, 2017). There is evidence of increasing income deprivation, with average weekly household

incomes decreasing from £334 in 2011 to £283 in 2015 (IBP Strategy and Research for the Govanhill Community Development Trust, 2015). This is likely to be partly driven by welfare reform.

- Around a quarter of Govanhill's residents are living in poverty and the child poverty rate is 30% (Govanhill Regeneration Group, 2017).

The outcomes of these problems of poverty, overcrowding, and subsequent environmental issues are reinforced and exacerbated by consistently negative media coverage of the area and its 'community tensions'. This perpetuates divisions and a culture of blame. As the largest ethnic minority in the area and a 'new' migrant population, having largely come from Slovakia and Romania from EU enlargement in 2004 onwards, Roma are often at the sharp end of poor housing, labour market precariousness, and exploitation. Specific challenges for Roma in this context include literacy and language barriers, which mean that any employment opportunities tend to be low-skilled and low-waged. Roma who are working are often engaged in casual labour in chicken factories, food processing plants, supermarket warehouses, car washes, and in the agricultural and hospitality industries. For Roma women, disproportionate levels of child caring responsibilities make finding employment or accessing education more difficult, although the recent establishment of Modern Apprenticeships for bilingual Romanes-speaking Teaching Assistants in local schools is cause for optimism.

Why Friends of Romano Lav Exists

To combat these problems and improve the quality of life for Roma in Glasgow, we have initiated a range of projects that aim to integrate Roma communities in society through creating opportunities for capacity building and voluntary work, promotion of intercultural dialogue, and challenging discrimination. From our experience working with young Romani people, we believe that it is important to start this work from an early age. There are many negative perceptions and stereotypes regarding Roma people that need to be challenged and dismantled. Roma must be welcome, present, and visible in the public sphere and their contribution to our communities and to society must be valued. Investing in young Romani people's capacities and in their prospects now is a critical factor in changing their future. We believe that taking steps towards overcoming these structural disadvantages and improving opportunities for representation and

participation could contribute, in a small way, towards breaking the centuries-long cycle of poverty and discrimination they face and for future generations of Roma to come.

Our objectives:

- to prevent and to relieve poverty among members of Roma communities living in Glasgow;
- to advance arts and culture, and in particular to raise awareness, understanding and appreciation of Roma culture among all local communities;
- to provide recreational activities, with the object of improving the quality of life for the local community as a whole and with particular reference to encouraging members of the Glasgow Roma communities to participate;
- to advance education, in particular supporting training and work experience and improving employability especially for Romani young people; and
- to promote racial harmony, equality and diversity, with a view to addressing the social exclusion suffered by members of Glasgow Roma communities.

April 2019

Community-led welfare rights and legal advice project

From April of this financial year up until June, we continued and completed our community led welfare project, delivered by Romano Lav in partnership with the Govanhill Baths Community Trust. We were funded to jointly deliver a welfare rights and legal advice project in Govanhill to ensure that Eastern European and Roma communities could access legal advice and benefits advice, including universal credit and Settled Status applications, as well as to access the housing support they require.

Our model of delivery was human rights-based, and client-centred. We worked responsively to client needs: in some cases, resolving matters for many individuals in a single, one-off appointment, and in others, working intensively with individuals and families over time to resolve long-standing and deep-rooted issues. Crucially, this project was not only based on increasing service provision to meet community need, but also on empowerment: it was



devised to build capacity within our local Roma communities, and in particular, within our Roma young people.

This project was designed around the principle of reciprocal knowledge and skills exchange between the workers. On the one hand, Roma young people were employed as trainee welfare rights advisors and developed many new skills through working alongside senior advisors by a peer-led model of co-design, co-production, and co-delivery. On the other, experienced welfare rights advisors employed on the project were able to provide welfare rights advice to communities they had never previously engaged with, by virtue of working alongside the multilingual trainees, who also furnished them with the necessary cultural competency to meaningfully engage with the local communities, to understand client needs, and thus, to carry out this work effectively. The combination of these skillsets allowed us to provide a unique, effective, and client-centred welfare rights service that is unlike any other locally insofar as it was led by members of the Roma communities themselves and specifically tailored to their needs.

The main achievements of the project may be summarised as follows:

- We engaged with over 300 individuals over the course of the project through the drop-in clinic, appointments, and streetwork,
- We supported 51 families (reaching in excess of 200 individuals) as clients to maximise their incomes and access the benefits that they are entitled to,
- We created employment opportunities for 6 welfare rights workers, 4 of whom were new to advice provision, and crucially, 5 of the 6 welfare rights workers employed on the project were members of the Roma communities themselves,
- We supported 12 local Roma people to start or sustain their own businesses and other forms of self-employment, by awarding 12 Opre Roma Start Up grants,
- We partnered with the human rights law firm to upskill our workers to extend their competencies to support Settled Status applications and all of our staff received OISC accredited immigration advice training,
- We developed an in-house welfare rights curriculum tailored specifically to the needs and issues commonly presented within the local community.

Moreover, in just four months (February - June 2019), we generated £55,175.44 in additional income for the community! We were delighted by the project's success and these results are testimony to the efforts of our young workers.

Total one off payments:	£20,479.80
Total better off:	£29,088.12
Total regular payments increase:	£5608.32
<u>TOTAL COMMUNITY INCOME GENERATED:</u>	<u>£55,175.44</u>

International Roma Day

International Roma Day (8th April) is celebrated every year internationally. This was established in 1990 by the World Romani Congress of the International Romani Union as a day dedicated to celebrating Roma culture and raising awareness about issues faced by Roma.

In Glasgow, International Roma Day has been celebrated since 2013 with a large public procession and a related series of events celebrating Roma history, traditions and the cultural contribution of Roma people. It is organised by Friends of Romano Lav, community members, and partner organisations.

As a relatively new community in Glasgow, Roma are faced with some of the discrimination that they have been subject to historically, so International Roma day also raises awareness about the issues that Roma still face. International Roma Day provides a crucial space for Roma and their neighbours to interact and to celebrate Roma pride - tackling social exclusion whilst instilling a sense of empowerment and support from the local community.

As always, we closed our day by offering traditional food and music and dancers from Poland, Bulgaria, Romania and Slovakia at a raucous reception locally. The post-procession reception also featured a play, commissioned by Romano Lav, which gave an artistic presentation of the story of Raymond Gurême. Our young community workers MC'ed this varied programme of locally-based creative talent.

International Roma Day events show the power of community initiatives and are a result of teamwork and collective action. Govanhill streets were filled with colourful placards offering many messages of hope, unity, and solidarity. It shows that together we can overcome barriers and build community cohesion. **Opre Roma!**



May 2019

Opre Roma! Start Up Grants

In May 2019 we devised a new project which would provide Opre Roma! Start Up Grants, applying for match funding to pay for materials, and distributed twelve grants of £250.00 to members of our local Roma communities for materials and equipment necessary to realise their dreams.

Romano Lav is pleased to announce our:

OPRE ROMA! START UP GRANTS

Are you **self-employed** and need some new equipment or training for your work?

Or do you need some **start-up funds** to make this idea happen?

We can help! Romano Lav has a number of **small grants (up to £250)** to support initiatives from members of our local Roma communities.



If you would like to apply for a **Romano Lav Opre Roma! Start Up Grant**, our advisors can help you fill out a short form explaining:

- what materials, equipment, or training you need,
- a breakdown of the costs of each item (up to a total of £250) and where it is from, with links to materials/equipment where available to purchase online,
- and a statement about how this would help you.

Pick up an application form at our advice project office at the GCDT community shop (the green shop at 192 Allison St!), make an appointment if you would like some help with it, and hand it in by **Friday 7 June 2019**. Or, email it to us at romano_lav@hotmail.co.uk.

Opre Roma!

Opre Roma Start Up Grants examples:

- One 19-year-old from Slovakia was funded to buy a bass guitar which they will use not only to become a professional musician, but also to teach other young people to play.
- One 30-year-old from the Czech Republic was funded to buy professional cleaning equipment to set up their own cleaning business.
- One 37-year-old from the Czech Republic was funded to buy professional make up artistry equipment in order to become a make-up artist.
- One 42-year-old from Slovakia was funded in order to carry out repairs on their car necessary for them to begin a career as a taxi driver.
- One 31-year-old from Romania was funded to buy an industrial lawnmower and fence equipment to begin their own gardening business.
- One 19-year-old from Romania was funded to buy equipment to set up their own car garage.
- One 45-year-old from Romania was funded to set up their own car washing business.
- One 46-year-old from Poland was funded to replace a broken guitar which was preventing their band from playing gigs.

These small-scale grants will go a long way to support the self-employed endeavours of local Roma communities. It is particularly salient for these grants to go to members of the Roma communities who are often the victims of labour exploitation. The Scottish government funded mapping survey found that many Roma people are employed on zero-hour contracts, or as casual labour teams in chicken factories, food processing plants, supermarket warehouses, or agricultural labour (Social Marketing Gateway, 2013). These types of employment often lend themselves to exploitation, as we have found from our work on the ground. It is positive that, for example, one self-employment initiative is to start a car washing business as this is often a sector where local Roma individuals are exploited with poor working conditions, low pay and insecure work hours.

However, a key factor that makes this path difficult to follow is acquiring the necessary equipment and materials to undertake and sustain this work. Self-employment is such that many jobs do not pay until completion but require an advance for the purchasing of materials. Without the means to pay for these materials up-front and recoup those costs at the end, this can be an insurmountable barrier to self-employment. This is a widespread problem that

requires large-scale community investment, however with our Opre Roma grants, we aimed to address this in a modest way by using our resources to provide a number of community members with small start-up grants to remove this barrier. We would like to see further such investments to unleash the talents and skills within our local communities.

Number of Approved Applications	12
Amount Approved for each application	£250.00
Total amount approved	£3,000.00

June 2019

Film programme and Black Cat, White Cat Screening

Having commenced our new partnership project with Southside Film co-funded by Regional Screen Scotland) in February 2019, we continued to run our film programme throughout the rest of the year up until its culmination in CineRoma, our three day film festival curated by Roma youth (see p32). The film programme arose from the two organisations respective objectives (i) our desire to challenge negative representations and find new creative means to promote/celebrate Roma culture, and (ii) Southside Film's desire to engage local Roma communities with their events/activities to create a more inclusive programme, as they were aware that despite the size of the local Roma population, this was not reflected in their audiences, nor in their film programme. These mutual interests led to our fruitful and intensive collaborative film programme centred around Roma cinema.

We co-hosted fortnightly workshops from February-August 2019 with a group of Roma young people who formed the selection committee: covering all aspects of film including research, critical discussion, tech, licensing, marketing, and practical filmmaking. We were keen not to

predetermine the nature of the 'outputs' from these workshops, which were to be decided by the group itself. After much discussion about whether we should integrate Roma film screenings within a mainstream local Southside Film Festival or hold standalone programme of screenings, through the course of our discussions, we decided to do both: hosting a special one-off free screening of 'Black Cat White Cat' (a Serbian Roma comedy film selected by the group) together in June - with the screening followed by a performance from a local young Roma band, Gypsy Lexus and traditional Roma food served - and collectively creating a fully fledged Roma film festival.

Black Cat, White Cat: free film screening with Roma food and live music!



Black Cat, White Cat is a riotous mix of farce, romance and crime. Set within a community of Roma people, it tells a story of young love, family ties, and magical occurrences. A colourful comedy, crammed with spectacle, incident, and powerful Romani music.

Silver Lion Winner at the Venice Film Festival 1998.

Selected to screen by the Romano Lav youth group, who programmed this event in collaboration with Southside Film Festival.

Please note: this film has been rated Cert 15 by the BBFC for drug use and coarse language, but the venue will have a special area for children separate from the screening with child friendly activities, so feel free to bring your kids along!

Saturday 8 June
3pm - 7pm (Doors 2.30 - first come first served!) at:
Bike for Good, 539 Victoria Road/Langside Lane, G42 8BH

Bike for Good is
down a lane just
off Victoria Road
(Queens Park
end) - **here!**
→



With generous support from:



GRT history month

We were proud to be one of the key organisations in this year's Gypsy Roma Traveller History Month. We celebrated this with three key events in the month of June: Raymond's 'Hero's Message' tour and a concert and awards ceremony at the CCA.

Hero's Message tour

During GRT History Month, we capitalised on the momentum of engagement with Raymond's story as showcased in our International Roma Day play and brought him back to Govanhill, one year on from his initial visit, to further spread his message.



We used our core VAF funding to host a community reception for Raymond in Govanhill where he shared his story, took questions from the audience, and met with our local Roma communities over a delicious traditional Romani meal, as well as to promote the event via streetwork, and to purchase him an honorary gift (an engraved quaich marking his legacy). We also acquired match funding to support a wider tour to allow Raymond to spread his message beyond Govanhill and throughout Scotland and England. In Scotland, as well as the flagship event that was the Roma community reception in Govanhill, this also included visiting Scottish Travellers and Showmen in Govan in Glasgow and meeting ministers at the Scottish Parliament, where a reception was held in his honour. Raymond then proceeded on a tour around the UK, including visiting the Scottish Parliament and the annual Appleby Horse Fair in Cumbria.



GRT concert and awards ceremony

Our second event for GRT History Month was held at the CCA (the Centre for Contemporary Arts), co-hosted with Ando Glaso, featuring a photography exhibition and talk/Q&A by internationally-renowned portrait photographer Jeremy Sutton-Hibbert, showcasing [his work](#) across decades with a Roma community in Romania, followed by an awards ceremony with certificates handed out by Rahela and Mariana for our Opre Roma! Start Up Grants (small grants of up to £250 to support self-employment initiatives from our local Roma communities), before closing with a performance from Romane Cierhenia.

July 2019

Dikh He Na Bister

Dikh He Na Bister, 'Look and Don't Forget', is an initiative to remember the Roma Genocide. It takes the form of a week-long annual youth event held in Krakow, Poland each year on the 2nd of August, Roma Genocide Memorial Day. The Dikh He Na Bister event aims to raise awareness among young Europeans, civil society, and decision-makers about the Roma Genocide, as well as about the mechanisms of antigypsyism in the challenging context of rising racism, hate speech and extremism in Europe today. At this year's gathering, which was the 75th anniversary of the Roma Holocaust, there were over 500 Roma and non-Roma youth representatives of various activist and campaign groups across Europe present, and Romano Lav were invited to send a delegation.

In preparation, Romano Lav ran a series of workshops in Govanhill attended by all of our sessional staff alongside some Gypsy/Traveller young people from partner organisations who were also set to attend Dik He Na Bister as part of the Scottish delegation. In these workshops, we discussed both the event and the history of the Roma Genocide. One of our longstanding young sessional workers, Leon, was keen to go along and represent Romano Lav at Dik He Na Bister, alongside our Chair, Davie Donaldson, who headed up the Scottish delegation. We were delighted with Leon's enthusiasm, as well as his strong contributions throughout the preparatory workshops, which can be partly attributed to the hard work Romano Lav has done over the past few years to raise awareness and educate on the subject of the Roma Holocaust within the local community. Without this prefigurative work, and the support of Romano Lav staff to organise travel, training workshops and our representatives, it is likely that the Scottish contingent of Gypsy Roma and Travellers to Dikh He Na Bister would have not included a Roma young person. In addition, before the event in Poland, Leon attended a meeting in the Scottish Parliament with Minister for Equalities and Older people, Christina McKelvie, MSP where the Scottish contingent was given permission to lay a wreath on behalf of the Scottish Government.

Over the six day event in Poland, Leon was able to participate in over 40 workshops and lectures that were facilitated by experts and activists in the fields of the Roma Genocide, Holocaust studies, human rights education and youth activism. He also had the chance to meet Roma Holocaust survivors, Raymond Gureme, Krystyna Gil and Ivan Bilashchenko, and hear their stories. The main remembrance event was a commemoration ceremony at Auschwitz on August 2nd with over 1,000 attendees, including representation from European Commission, the

International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, the Council of Europe, the OSCE and the United Nations, which recieved significant media coverage. At this event Leon took part in laying the wreath on behalf of the Scottish Government for the Roma Holocaust remembrance.

This trip was an excellent opportunity to network, represent Romano Lav on an international level, and a chance for our young people to further their education about both the holocaust and Romani resistance. In particular, Leon's attendance at Dikh He Na Bister was important, not only for himself, but also for Romano Lav. Romano Lav, whilst retaining its grassroots base, has begun to develop both a national and an international profile. Attendance at high profile events like these helps us to gain further recognition outside of our immediate area of work, and, in addition, assists us in developing a relationship with other European Roma organisations.

This trip also created a rare space for conversations and friendships between GRT young people from different communities (Eastern European migrant Roma young people and Scottish Traveller young people). This helps these communities to build informal networks of solidarity and strengthen alliances between the diverse GRT communities and their associated organisations. Romano Lav's participation has further strengthened our relationship with the associated organisation for the rest of the Scottish group, Article 12.

By strengthening the cooperation between Roma and non-Roma youth and youth organizations, this initiative can shape the collective historical memory, awareness and respect for human rights and connects to the need for a wider official recognition of the Roma Genocide in Europe, as well as the recognition of August 2nd, as a Memorial Day of the Roma Genocide during World War II.





August 2019

Govanhill Carnival

The Govanhill Festival and Carnival is a celebration of everything that makes Govanhill great, and in particular, its unique diversity: at once a melting pot and microcosm of multiculturalism in all of its rich plurality. As the most diverse neighbourhood in Scotland, and one of the most diverse neighbourhoods in the UK out of London, this is akin to Govanhill's Notting Hill! This is of special importance to our local Roma communities: due to the stigma that Roma communities are often subject to locally. This series of events thus ensures that Roma young people feel that their culture is not only recognised and represented but celebrated as contributing to what makes Govanhill such a special place. Our Roma youth team played a key role in organising this festival. From this important event's establishment three years ago, we have worked in close partnership with other participating organisations, and in particular with main organisers Govanhill Baths Community Trust, increasing our remit year on year. This culminated in our leading role within this year's carnival steering group: marking our transition from participants to co-organisers. We also produced a series of Roma-focused events within the wider programme (including our commemorative Holocaust memorial event, which marked the opening of the festival and Govanhill's first outdoor Transylvanian Ceilidh).

Our Roma youth team played a key role in organising this festival: Rahela represented Romano Lav when giving an opening speech at the formal opening ceremony of the Festival alongside representatives of other key organisations; mobilising their communities through streetwork; organising and recruiting Roma musicians to perform at the concerts; organising a Roma block and leading it during the vibrant procession; working as stewards and supporting the running of kids activities in Queen's Park throughout the afternoon. A wide array of different acts from across the world performed throughout the afternoon as part of the programme. This included a beautiful performance and dance provided by our longstanding sessional worker Sonia and Glasgow-based band Romane Cierhenia. That evening, we hosted Govanhill's first outdoor Transylvanian ceilidh alongside our partner organisation Ando Glaso in Queen's Park auditorium. This was a truly joyous affair, with an exceptional performance from local Roma musicians and dancers all the way from Bucharest to Budapest that we flew to Glasgow especially for this performance, acquiring match funding to do so. As our performers took stage, the rain cleared, and we danced as the sun came down and indeed for the duration of a successful and well-attended ceilidh in the park. It was a magnificent way to round off a wonderful day.






Roma Holocaust memorial

The 2 August 2019 marked the 75th anniversary of the Roma Holocaust. We marked this occasion by unveiling a permanent memorial in Glasgow's Queen's Park Rose Garden, planted by the Roma youth team from Romano Lav.

For the place of Roma culture and history to be fully recognised in Scotland, we must extend beyond celebrating culture, and also struggle for rights and against injustices and inequalities. This also involves reckoning with history. In this respect, we underscore the importance of commemoration too, which is epitomised by the relatively recent commemoration of August 2nd in Scotland. August 2nd is Roma Holocaust Memorial Day, a day of commemoration and resistance, which was declared internationally 71 years after the night of 2/3 August 1944, when nearly 4,000 Roma and Sinti women, men, and children were murdered in the gas chambers of Auschwitz-Birkenau. The 2 August 2019 marked the 75th anniversary of the Roma Holocaust.

Through our Roma Holocaust memorial's original unveiling and its replacement, we created a material representation of our solidarity with Roma across the world who faced persecution during the Holocaust. Its unveiling was groundbreaking as it was the first memorial of these events in Scotland. Its location in Queen's Park, on the edge of Govanhill, was crucial in allowing accessibility, in particular, to local Roma in Govanhill who make up the majority of Scotland's Roma.



ROMA HOLOCAUST DAY MEMORIAL

Fri 02 Aug, 12:00 – 2:30pm
Govanhill Memorial Gardens and Queen's Park

On August 2nd 1944 nearly 4,000 Roma and Sinti women, men, and children were murdered in the gas chambers of Auschwitz-Birkenau. Seventy-one years later, August 2nd was officially declared "Roma Holocaust Memorial Day" internationally. At a time of heightened racism the importance of remembering the fate of the Roma remains as urgent as ever. Join Romano Lav as we mark this important day. We will begin with the unveiling of a plaque at the Community Garden of the Govanhill Housing Association. We will then proceed together to Queen's Park, where we will plant a tree in commemoration.





Govanhill Book festival

In addition to her speeches launching the Govanhill International Carnival and Festival and those which marked the unveiling of the Holocaust Memorial Plaque and the planting of the Romani Rose tree, Rahela's talent for public speaking was in high demand in August 2019. She was also invited on behalf of Romano Lav to take part in a panel to launch the inaugural Govanhill Book Festival. Rahela was part of a panel of local leaders in a discussion about Govanhill, chaired by the Govanhill-based Evening Times and Herald journalist Cat Stewart. Rahela spoke of her own experiences of coming to Govanhill and making a home and family there. She also spoke on behalf of Romano Lav about our work in the area to the diverse audience in attendance.

September 2019

CineRoma

Our focus in these areas led to our fruitful and intensive collaborative film programme centred around Roma cinema with Southside Film Festival. This partnership enabled us to create a fully-fledged Roma film festival, CineRoma, in September 2019. This was the first Roma film festival in the UK and only the third in Europe. This was a three-day spectacle, with live traditional Romani music, film, and food throughout an entire weekend (27 – 30 September 2019). As discussed previously, the event was led by our Roma young people, who made up the selection committee for the film programme, created 'living trailers', featured in and helped record a documentary, and took part in a discussion panel and Q&A after one of their film selections 'Our School' where they reflected on the film's themes and their own experiences of schooling both locally and abroad.

We invited both local Roma communities and the wider community, which created an opportunity for meaningful intercultural dialogue. Over the course of the weekend we screened 5 films selected by our young people. Every screening was busy, and we filled the room to capacity for several of our sessions.

Also on the programme for each day was a live performance from locally-based Roma musicians and food courtesy of locally-based Romani caterers showcasing different styles of Romani cuisine (with particular influences from Polish, Czech, and Romanian Romani recipes). As a result, the film festival was a celebration of various aspects of Roma culture and involved the talents, work, and planning of a wide-range of locals.

Romano Lav strongly believes that cinema and the arts have a crucial role to play in challenging stereotypes and promoting Roma culture. Thus, we were delighted to have this opportunity to engage our young people with the arts and have them play a central role in showcasing Roma culture and cinema to a diverse audience.

The event was advertised and appealed to a wide array of people interested in film, music, and Romani food. As a result, our audiences across the three days came from all over Glasgow and beyond. Our young team did a stellar job in our usual streetwork advertisement model alongside a social media campaign, and advertisements throughout the city through posterage and flyering further afield than just Govanhill. As a result, each day was busy and exposed Roma and non-Roma alike to an interesting and entertaining programme of viewing, listening, and dining.

Romano Lav always strives to make our events as vibrant and representative of Scotland's Roma communities as possible. CineRoma was a fantastic example of this as a platform through which we showcased the talents of local musicians and caterers as a complimentary addition to our film programme. Our performers ranged in age, with multiple generations of Romanian, Hungarian, Czech, and Slovak musicians displaying their musicianship.

Likewise, our catering was a means through which we could employ some wonderful local cooks to provide an array of delicious treats. As a result, we created a space in which the wide array of expertise and cultures which thrive locally could be viewed and sampled. Over the course of the three days we saw many different people arriving to suit their interests.

Whilst many Roma young people are often involved in music and dance opportunities, filmmaking and cinema is a relatively new area of creative interest for the local Roma communities. Through this we have seen an increase in interest in cinema, film making, and the arts more generally. Our young people and attendees alike, have been excited since the close of the weekend's festivities for the potential of CineRoma 2.0 in 2020. With this in mind, we also extended our film-making project focus into our local school programme.

The ground-breaking nature of CineRoma was noted by both national press and by other Roma organisations. The Roma Support Group commented that CineRoma showed Glasgow 'leading the way again' and partly dedicated one of their newsletters to coverage of CineRoma. The National newspaper in Scotland had a two-page spread on the event. They commented that 'CineRoma was a vibrant and successful event' and said that the film festival taking place

‘speaks volumes about the tremendous progress that has been made in Govanhill in recent years’.









CINEROMA

The UK's First Roma Film Festival

Film, Food and Music

Friday 27th - Sunday 29th September 2019

Entry by donation

Bike for Good (South)

539 Victoria Road

G42 8BH

southsidefilm.co.uk

November 2019

Board Development Day

In November we held a dynamic and highly productive Board Development day, ran by our Chair Davie Donaldson. This was an opportunity for our board members to sit down with staff and collectively discuss our organization and our collective hopes and aims for the future.

The day was structured by four key areas;

- an activity discussion around Romano Lav's past, present at future (Romano Lav's Story),
- a discussion on how we could better support, train and empower our board's skills and strengths (Strengthening our Board Members),
- a discussion around the degree of inclusivity we wished for our board, and how could we viably ensure this inclusivity and accessibility (Inclusive and Accessible Governance),

and finally,

- a discussion around strengthening our alliances with third sector and public sector bodies, as well as looking at enhancing and embedding a co-productive and progressive approach to project work (Strengthening Our Alliances).

It was a fantastic and worthwhile exercise in team-building and morale boosting, and a space where staff and board members alike were open with what they envisioned as the future of Romano Lav, and discussed concrete and manageable steps to realising these goals.



Teaching at UWS

We were delighted in November 2019 to be invited to give a guest lecture, followed by a Q&A session at the University of the West of Scotland. The lecture was given to an audience of undergraduate students studying the sociology of migration. Rahela led the lecture, supported by fellow project coordinator Kirsty and the Q&A session with students afterwards.

This was a hugely important experience, in particular, for our project coordinator Rahela. As a 21 year old Roma woman who has no prior experience within higher education settings, to give an invited lecture to a full university lecture hall. The power relations that govern knowledge production - what counts as knowledge, and who speaks with authority - entail that, in academic settings, Roma are often reduced to objects of research, and this lecture opportunity represented a powerful and significant moment for a young Roma woman to be recognised as an expert in her own experiences (no less, to be recruited for this prestigious invited lecture slot on that basis and to be paid accordingly). The students were deeply impressed as well as moved by the experience and we received a series of follow-up questions and notes of thanks from the students on the course via our social media pages.





December 2019

Self-Care Workshops

Our four self-care pilot workshops took place at the end of 2019 and were designed for groups of local Roma women of varying ages. They aimed at providing a safe and supportive space for Roma women to take some time out of their busy lives for some pampering and relaxation. The project was created and planned after an identification of a lack of support, particularly for women, in the context of mental health. In the workshops the women had space to discuss their stresses and lives more generally in a supportive environment. Rahela led these sessions which lasted for two hours in a salon at the heart of Govanhill, with refreshments provided.

Our four-week pilot was well-attended, productive, and offered a rare and valuable space for Roma women within the community to engage with each other and share experiences in a safe and supportive space. Crucially, as this was a space for Roma women only, the workshops were Roma led, held in Romanes, and facilitated by Project Coordinator, Rahela. The workshops were successful and through their community led nature, appeared to offer a means to tackle what were often difficult issues to raise, to the point of being potentially unbroachable. This was also another example of Rahela's development as the conception of these workshops stemmed from her own idea, as developed through our discussions, through to its roll-out as a project, and with Rahela leading on every aspect along the way. The success of these workshops has sharpened our focus on providing a supportive space through our projects in particular for Roma women into our ongoing planning for future projects.

St Nicholas Party

In December we had our now annual celebration for St Nicholas Day. St Nicholas Day is a tradition in Central/Eastern Europe where many of our Roma families were born. St Nicholas' Day is celebrated on December 8th each year at Romano Lav's party with music, dance, games, face-painting and, of course, a gift for each child from none other than Santa! The continued celebration of these events helps to preserve cultural identity whilst fostering a sense of belonging for the community within Scotland.

Our St Nicholas Party has many benefits; being an opportunity to combine two facets of our cultural strategy - both nurturing and promoting local Roma artists and showcasing professional Roma artists of the highest standards. These events have also become a central activity within the development of our young team's management skills, each taking lead on various aspects of the day: from catering, planning/shopping for gifts, stage management, streetwork

promotion/coordination, and evaluation. These skills are not only essential to our work but have served as greatly important to our young team's wider development of transferable skills to roles connected to other Third Sector opportunities and beyond. Lastly, due to disproportionate levels of poverty within the community, our gift-giving helps to ensure that all Romani children receive a present for Christmas.







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January 2020

Holocaust Memorial Restoration Event

In November 2019, we were horrified to discover the destruction of our memorial plaque when we heard from a local resident that had gone to visit it. We at Romano Lav were disgusted by this act of vandalism and released a statement immediately afterwards condemning the act. We were overwhelmed by the outpouring of support and solidarity at the time. After a few months of discussions with local politicians and Glasgow City Council, who offered to fund the replacement of our memorial with a more permanent structure, we held an unveiling ceremony.



ROMANO LAV



ROMA VOICE

Romani Rose Tree

planted by Romano Lav

for

Roma Genocide Remembrance Day

2nd August

*in commemoration of all those Roma
who were murdered during the Holocaust*





Burns Night

Following the unveiling of our replacement Romani Holocaust memorial plaque in Queen's Park, we held an alternative Burns Night with some match funding from BEMIS through the Scottish Government's Winter Festivals fund. The night celebrated not only the life and works of Robert Burns, but also the ongoing contributions of Roma people in Scotland and beyond to international culture, in the form of poetry and music.

This event combined elements of a traditional Scottish Burns' night with elements of traditional Roma culture. It sought to strengthen ties between local Roma and Scottish people in Glasgow through an exchange of music, poetry and food. Attendees were able to enjoy haggis, neeps, and tatties, alongside traditional Romani cuisine prepared by a local caterer that we have a long-standing relationship with as an organisation. Our Roma young team read out poetry, including Burns poetry translated into community languages and Romani poems with English translations. The event ended on a high note with live music by local band Romacaleo, which showcased the local Roma contribution to the cultural scene in Glasgow.





February 2020

Annette Street Primary Filmmaking Programme

From late January 2020 until lockdown in March, we ran filmmaking workshops for Roma children in local primary school, Annette Street. These were led by local anthropologist and filmmaker Toni Bruce and were supported by multilingual sessional staff from our Roma youth team, whose attendance means that children who are relatively new to Scotland, or for whom English language learning is at an emergent stage, were able to participate in the programme. This primary school in Govanhill is one of the most unique schools in Scotland, if not the UK. As Govanhill is the most diverse place in Scotland, this vibrant multiculturalism is reflected in the demographic profile of the local schools, with Annette Street Primary School in particular representing a microcosm of this diversity.

This project was a progression for us and our creative partnership with the school, allowing us to diversify and broaden our creative curriculum, creating further opportunities to teach more young Roma children new skills through creative mediums, which celebrate Roma culture and

identities. The programme consisted of eight weeks of workshops where the children developed practical, creative, and technical skills, including filming, camera work, editing, narrative development, storyboarding, and narration with creative work. Young people were both behind and in front of the camera, with the filmmaking tutor acting as facilitator and with all scenes filmed and edited by the young people themselves.

This programme allowed the children of the primary school the opportunity to exercise agency and take control of their own representation, whilst challenging stereotypes often propagated by local and national media about the Roma community of Govanhill. The documentary, the narrative of which is decided by the young people, was an opportunity for them to speak for themselves and decide what they want to showcase about their identities, lives and communities. The children also had the opportunity to learn valuable skills in filmmaking and photography which can help to foster an interest beyond the initial project, improve their confidence and contribute to greater English language acquisition.

The programme would have culminated in a preview screening of the documentary in the lead-up week to International Roma Day within Annette Street school itself. This would have been part of the school's annual celebrations, traditionally organised in partnership with Romano Lav. The film would have been the main feature of a special school assembly which would have also had a community dance group and a colourful musical performance by traditional Romani musicians. This preview screening would have prefaced the documentary being screened at the centre of the cultural programme of International Roma Day 2020 itself, at the large-scale community celebration that follows our procession. Unfortunately, this project was halted half-way through our planned programme, due to the lockdown and the resultant school closure. We will look to complete this project which is safe and feasible to do so.







Roma Support Group Partnership Work

Recognising our place as the only Roma-led organisation in Scotland, we were approached in February 2020 by the Roma Support Group to collaborate in their Ketane (Romanes for 'together') project. New in 2020, their Ketane project is focussed around the Settled Status scheme in the UK. Roma have been identified as being particularly disadvantaged in making Settled Status applications, as our previous work on this issue with Roma communities in Glasgow has demonstrated.

The Roma Support Group is a national organisation which aims to coordinate and disseminate the work of local Roma organisations throughout the UK at a national level, building connections between these disparate groups to make our collective voices heard, such as through parliamentary lobbying, and whose work is focused around the improvement to the quality of life for Roma refugees and migrants by helping them to overcome prejudice, isolation and vulnerability. It is also their objective to make the public aware of Roma culture, heritage and the current situation of Roma refugees and migrants in the UK through cultural and informative events and publications. We have had a loose relationship with the Roma Support Group for years, including when Romano Lav were invited to represent the views and concerns of Roma communities in Scotland within their parliamentary roundtable event at Westminster in 2018.

They wanted to support us in organising an information event for Roma in Glasgow, through which we could both disseminate information about the Settlement scheme process and gather information about people's experiences to feed back into the information that RSG have from across the UK. We would then have a follow-up training event whereby people could actually do Settled Status applications with qualified advisors and their specific concerns or problems highlighted from the first session could be engaged with. We had arranged to engage a couple of our legal partner organisations (including Just Right Scotland) in this part of the project. This would have involved our young team working alongside immigration lawyers to meet community needs and would have been an outreach project hosted at a familiar local venue to ensure that the support on offer was accessible to our local Roma communities. Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 outbreak, these plans are on hold due to the current impracticality of giving advice and supporting community members to make Settled Status applications online (it is the online nature of the Settled Status application process, which requires access to an Android device, as well as linguistic, literacy, and technological competencies, that prevents many of our local community members from making the applications unassisted in the first place; a barrier that is, of course, exacerbated in the COVID-19 context).

This project would have given our young people the opportunity to hone their practical skills and confidence connected to translation and interpreting in formal legal settings. Moreover, it would have given them a supportive space in which they could become experts in the experiences of Roma applicants for Settled Status. The links in this project between national level organisations and Scotland-based lawyers would have exposed our young team to collaborations on different levels of strategic campaigning. It would have also placed them as key experts in experiences of Roma in Scotland within the wider UK-wide network. Moreover, RSG had a meeting organised at Westminster for discussions about these experiences in May 2020. Thus, as we have done in the past, we would have been able to support our sessional workers to go and share their experiences and knowledge of their own situation and the situations of others within Scotland's Roma communities at Westminster; an opportunity which would mean that they could take control of their own representation as well as participating in indirect political lobbying activities. Thus, it would allow us to pull the knowledge being accumulated across the UK, while putting the often unheard voices of Roma from Scotland amongst it, to better understand how the Home Office's Settled Status application process looks for Roma (and indeed other marginalised groups).

March 2020

Normally, the month of March would always be filled with preparations for our annual International Roma Day celebrations, which take place at the beginning of April. However this was no ordinary month due to the onset of the global pandemic caused by COVID-19. We could not partake in the streetwork we would normally do to advertise the event, as well as the placard making sessions we had planned with local primary schools. We made the difficult decision to cancel the event, and focussed our energies on how we would be able to deliver a virtual replacement online.

Funders



**The Scottish
Government**
Riaghaltas na h-Alba



**Voluntary
Action Fund**



**Empowering Scotland's Ethnic and
Cultural Minority Communities**

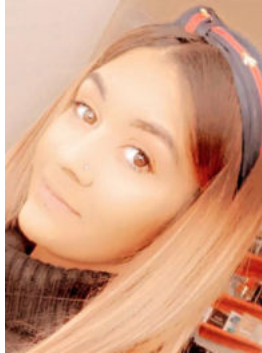


Staff/Volunteers

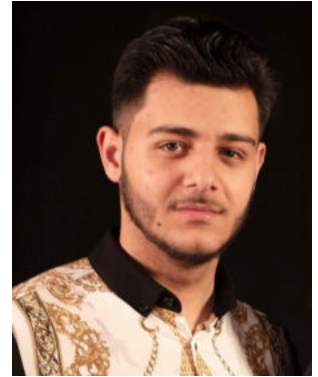
Rahela Cirpaci
Project Coordinator



Valerie Ginova
Sessional worker



David Milosiu
Sessional worker



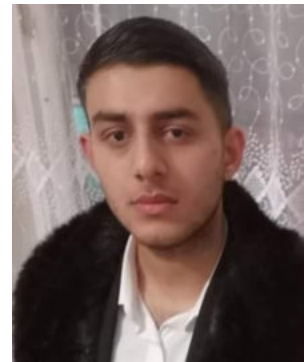
Kirsty McNeill
Project co-coordinator



Leon Puska
Sessional worker



Isac Milosiu
Sessional worker



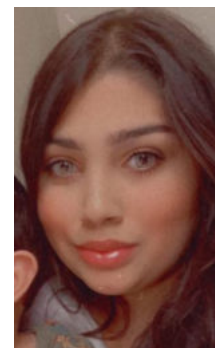
Blair Biggar
Project co-coordinator



Ashli Mullen
Creative Director



Mariana Gombarova
Sessional worker



Financial Statement

Summarised statement of financial activities for the financial year
2019 – 2020 (1st of April 2019 to 31st of March 2020)

Balance from previous year	£39, 524
Income from Grants and Donations	£54, 319 (Donations - £6, 847 Grants - £46, 826 Receipts from fundraising activities - £646)
TOTAL Income	£54,319

Expenditure for Charitable Activities	£86,792
TOTAL Expenditure	£86,792



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