

# GCCN

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## WE LOVE ROMA

*Sharon Chan*



Through three articles by Melody Wachsmuth published in different magazines in the USA in 2013, we learned about the Roma people (Gypsies) in Eastern Europe. It was estimated that there are about 12 million in Europe alone. Some Eastern European countries have about 7-10% of their population to be Roma people. Although they were born in the country which they reside, they are being neglected and marginalized by the local people. They are living in extreme poverty and about 80% are unemployed. They have very low self-esteem.

After learning the needs of the Roma people, GCCI decided to sponsor a mission Consultation for the Roma people on September 29 to October 3, 2014 in Budapest, Hungary. The theme for the Consultation was "Roma for the Nations 2014". About 100 Roma Christian leaders together with 30 European mission leaders and western missionaries from over 15 countries attended this historic Consultation. We were told that this was the first time that Roma Christian leaders were given the opportunity to be master of ceremony, as well as plenary and workshop speakers in any Consultation. We could see that God is raising up a number of young Roma Christian leaders for the expansion of His Kingdom. Before the end of the Consultation, the Roma leaders pledged to organize the second Roma Mission Consultation by forming a 6-member Steering Committee to be responsible for the preparation work.

For the next three years, GCCI will work alongside the Roma Christian leaders and will organize short-term mission teams to help them in different areas, such as Children and Youth Camp, Medical and Dental Service, Public Health Education, Farming etc.. We need all kind of experts to join hands to help the Roma people who are created also in the image of God and are waiting for the Gospel messages. The first mission trip is scheduled in mid-July. Please contact GCCI offices (US, Canada and Hong Kong) for details. Or, visit our website, [www.gcciusa.org](http://www.gcciusa.org).

Roma need the gospel and need our brotherly love. God has opened the door for us and has showed us how to serve them. Would you respond to God's call?



# Roma for the Nations –

## A Reflection on the First International Mission Consultation to the Roma, Budapest, Hungary, 2014

*By Steve Evans*



**I**n more than one way, this is a unique and historical consultation,” said Dr. Anne-Marie Kool in a plenary address at the First International Mission Consultation to the Roma held in Budapest, Hungary, September 29 through October 3, 2014. “First of all because of great diversity in the participants; but also because it is convened by a Chinese mission organization.” Kool is Visiting Professor at Protestant Theological Faculty, Charles University in Prague, Czech Republic.

### Where did it all begin?

With the theme “Roma for the Nations,” the event was hosted by the Great Commission Center International (GCCCI). Dr. Sharon Chan, president of GCCCI caught the Roma vision after reading three missiological articles published in 2013 by cultural researcher Melody Wachsmuth: “God Among the Roma People” in *Christianity Today*; “Loving Our ‘Unwanted’ Neighbors” in *Mission Frontiers*; and “Separated Peoples: The Roma as Prophetic Pilgrims in Eastern Europe” in *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*.

Then she called a special prayer meeting in Hong Kong and shared about the Roma and their general situation in Europe, with special focus on the popula-

tion, education, employment housing issues and Gospel needs. After the meeting, participants agreed to continue praying for the Roma and decided on a fact-finding trip to Eastern Europe in November 2013.

After the trip, GCCCI decided to work with several church leaders in Eastern Europe to organize a mission conference in late 2014 focusing on the Roma. They planned to gather 100 Roma church leaders, 80 European church leaders who are working with or have a burden for evangelizing Roma people, and 50 international mission leaders, with the purpose of working alongside Roma churches to take the gospel to their people.

### Fivefold Purpose of the Consultation

The Budapest conference was in response to those plans. Its purpose was fivefold: 1) to stir up the awareness of the global church to care for the most neglected Roma people; 2) to encourage churches and mission agencies to strengthen their mission works among the Roma people; 3) to encourage Roma Christians to become missionaries; 4) to help networking small Roma churches for mutual support; and 5) to provide opportunity for churches and missionary organizations to form a united effort for Roma missions.



Citing Kool, Wachsmuth said, “There is an urgency to this matter.” Wachsmuth said that factors leading to this situation are complex, but basic social discrimination—found even in some churches—is a fact of daily life for Roma. “Still, many Roma leaders believe the church holds the key to transformation for the Roma,” she said.

Addressing conference participants, Kool agreed, saying there are three words important in the study of mission. “Spreading the Gospel starts with the incarnation, the message that Jesus Christ, the Son of God who became flesh to reconcile us with God,” Kool said. “It continues with translation of the Gospel in other cultures, and transformation, the impact of the conversion to Jesus Christ in our life and on our cultures. I use these three keywords as tools to reflect on the Eastern European churches’ responses to Roma people.” (See separate article: Roma Mission: Four Responses of Eastern European Churches)

Mapping the eastern European churches’ responses to Roma people is nearly an impossible task, according to Kool. First of all because eastern European churches are a mixture of “traditional” churches that have existed for ages, with many “new” churches planted after 1989. Secondly, because “off the radar” independent initiatives are going on, “with the sacrificial commitment of many a lonely worker,” she said. “Not much has been published about these initiatives.” Language barriers increase the complexity of mapping the eastern European churches responses to the Roma people, Kool insisted.

Numerous studies have been published on the Roma from an anthropological, sociological, ethnological, human rights and human development perspective. Few studies deal with the Roma people from a religious perspective, Kool said. However, “it is this religious element that has a decisive influence on the effectiveness and success of projects.”

Kool said that more and more studies are now also focusing on the churches as a “religious phenomenon” and their impact on the Roma communities. “Still, a theological, missiological perspective is missing,” she said.

In *Mission Frontiers*, Wachsmuth poignantly asked, “Why does our compassion so often scab over in response to those closest, and most unlike us, even as our hearts burn with passion for ‘those in need’ who are far off?” She pondered, “Perhaps Jesus told

his parable of the Good Samaritan in order to elicit a visceral reaction regarding the true challenge of loving our neighbor—a reaction we can experience today if we take out the word Samaritan and insert a neighbor with whom we share close physical proximity but try to avoid.”

Wachsmuth continued, “The Roma make up Europe’s largest minority and yet remain largely invisible. The poverty and educational levels are often far below the average in each respective European country, and their history showcases a theme of disregarded suffering. It cannot be said, however, that this marginalization is simply due to ongoing discrimination—they are not passive agents in their own history. Rather, there are elements within the Roma culture itself which contribute to the separation from the surrounding culture.”



Roma sisters

## Reach the Roma Reach the Nations

Even after over 800 years of being in Europe, the Roma remain not only distinctly cross-cultural, but also profoundly unwelcome and unwanted, according to Wachsmuth. “Although there are exceptions, Roma communities in the Balkans hardly register on the local church’s missional radar screen,” she said. Wachsmuth quoted one Roma pastor as saying, “Nobody wants to accept the Roma. Not the traditional Serbian Orthodox church, not the Protestant church... so now is the time we can make our own church for the Roma.”

“Systematic poverty, a survivalist mentality, low education levels, different cultural values, and persistent prejudice have conspired to keep Roma at the bottom of European society,” Wachsmuth said,



A Roma Youth

“but effective discipleship has a proven track record of transforming individuals and renewing Roma culture.”

Kool also points out the importance of discipleship in reaching and developing the Roma, saying that while Roma churches have been strong on evangelism, their discipleship has been less effective. “It is effective discipleship that will strengthen the faith of the Roma,” she said, “but it will also inevitably move them towards social transformation.” Kool also said that teaching is important for the majority society churches, to include themes relevant for ministry among the Roma in the curricula of theological education and to focus in the missionary education of the local congregations on the importance of social reconciliation.

“A key question for the Eastern European majority churches is how they facilitate moving from ‘mission to the Roma’ to ‘Roma churches’ or to a ‘Church for all,’” Kool said. There are signs of revivals among the Roma, but “We know little about the revivals going on, little about the Roma Christian communities themselves, and their Roma pastors. There are no dictionaries, encyclopedias or handbooks with descriptions of the Roma church fathers and mothers, similarly as till recently with the African churches. African church history was written exclusively from the perspective of the missionaries and their supporting churches, without giving attention to the role of the Africans themselves, in bringing the gospel to their people.”

Concluding her conference plenary address, Kool said, “Giving the Roma Christianity a face, making steps towards getting to know Roma church history, will not only be beneficial in teaching the Roma churches, but also to help the majority society to move from image to reality.”

Wachsmuth contributed to these thoughts. Writing for the *International Bulletin of Missionary Research*, she said that Roma churches are both indigenous and pilgrim in nature, approaching church life, worship, mission, and interpreting the Bible in a way that flows out of the distinctives of their worldview. “They have no country that would compete for their loyalty, nor can they be comfortable in the countries they live in because of their relative powerlessness and poverty,” she said. “This weakness compels them to be in a state of constant movement toward God.”

Wachsmuth said that among the Roma, God reveals His kingdom through miracles, divine provision, and dreams. More importantly, she said, many Roma respond wholeheartedly to these signs. “The challenges of holistic discipleship are formidable and complex,” said Wachsmuth, “and yet when the church finally becomes established, it acts as a prophetic witness regarding the holistic nature of the kingdom.”

She said that the transformation of a Roma village can act as a centripetal, or “come and see” type of mission to the majority culture around it. “The movement from the center to the periphery in order to witness the transformation in villages has the potential to bridge the formidable separation, potentially empowering Roma to then be ‘sent’ to the center,” Wachsmuth said.

“It is critical for Roma Christianity in eastern Europe to be studied in relationship to the majority-culture churches,” Wachsmuth said. “Several Roma pastors and individuals who work with Roma have said, ‘Now is the time for the Roma.’ If indeed Roma families and villages continue to be transformed by the power of God and Roma churches continue to spread throughout eastern Europe, then it is also time for the majority-culture churches to pay attention to God’s presence in the margins of their own society.”

Other conference speakers included GCCI founder Thomas Wang, GCCI president Sharon Chan, Operation Mobilization founder George Verwer, and Serbian Romani pastor Serif Bakic. Workshops were held on social issues, church ministry, and evangelism & outreach.

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# Who are the Roma?



Almost everywhere they go, the Roma are referred to—somewhat pejoratively—as “Gypsies,” a people who have migrated throughout the world over the course of several centuries. It is believed they are originally a Hindi people from northern India. They left India about 1,500 years ago, and the Roma who are now in Europe migrated through the Balkans about 900 years ago. Roma arrived in medieval Europe in the 1100s.

There are at least 12 million Roma worldwide. After leaving northern India, most went to Europe. They are also in Turkey, which has about 2.75 million Roma, and there are large populations in Russia and Slovakia. There are Roma on almost every continent in the world, with about 1 million living in the United States and 800,000 in Brazil.

The Roma faced horrific persecution. Shortly after arriving in Europe, they were enslaved in many regions, continuing well into the 19th century in countries like Romania. In England, Switzerland and Denmark, the Roma were put to death throughout the medieval era. Many countries, such as Germany, Italy and Portugal, ordered the expulsion of all Roma.

There are countless reports of Roma children being abducted from their parents, women who had their ears cut off, and Romani who were branded with hot irons. In an effort to force assimilation, the use of their native language was forbidden in some countries; other places forbade the Roma to marry among themselves.

Perhaps the most devastating persecution of the Romani occurred during World War II, when they were among the first targets of Nazi atrocities. Up to 2 million Roma died at the hands of the Nazis. After the war, the Roma remained an oppressed group, especially in the Soviet Union. As recently as the 1980s, Roma women in Czechoslovakia were forced to undergo sterilization to limit the Roma population.

Roma culture is rich and fascinating. The Roma are often celebrated for their musical heritage, which has influenced jazz, bolero, flamenco music, as well as classical composers including Franz Liszt. Traditional Roma society still arranges marriages between minors as young as 12. Teenage brides are sometimes bartered and traded between Roma communities, an activity that has alarmed European officials concerned with human trafficking; children have reportedly been engaged for labor, petty crime and sexual exploitation.

The Roma remain an oppressed group. Many avoid assimilation with the larger societies of their host countries; maybe because of centuries of persecution. Many Roma children do not attend school, and the Roma typically lack access to stable jobs, affordable housing, health care and other social services. As a result, poverty, disease, substance abuse and crime plague many Roma communities. For these and other reasons, the Roma remain a persecuted minority, including those living in affluent European countries with extensive social services.

“Media reports of Christianity’s rapid growth among Europe’s 10 to 12 million Roma stand in contrast with the staggering prejudice they face,” said Wachsmuth, a plenary speaker at the Budapest conference, in Christianity Today. She is a cross-cultural researcher living in Croatia.

“During the Holocaust, 200,000 to 500,000 died in Nazi death camps. Today they are the world’s largest people group without their own nation state,” she said. “There are 70 subgroups of Roma, mostly tracing their origins to northern India. A 2012 World Bank and European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights survey found their situation in Europe grim. Only 15 percent finish upper-secondary general or vocational education, fewer than 30 percent are employed, and about 45 percent live in households lacking an indoor kitchen, a toilet, a shower or bath, or electricity.”



*Steve Evans*



# Hear What the Roma Pastors say on the Consultation

## Pastor Misha Bakic, a Roma youth pastor, says

**T**he consultation meant in many ways we never thought of. Firstly, to our great surprise, it was organized by our brotherly Chinese church which is almost unimaginable for the world but welcomed, organized and carried by the Kingdom of God. It meant for us to see God opening the eyes of THE church for the long forgotten and rejected Roma people. It not only reflects the grace, great love and acceptance of The Lord, but also for THE body of Christ globally becomes familiar with what God is doing among Roma people and how God is expending the Roma Church both locally and globally.

“The consultation brought many Roma leaders together which was a brilliant idea. The most important thing we’ve experienced is that even though we may be forgotten by man but still we are on the very center of God’s love and His caring. He is the one loving us, supporting us, fighting for every Roma soul, moving us, healing us and bringing salvation to us. Praise God!

“My personal expectation is firstly let it be continued. We have to continue on yearly basis to

organize and bring churches together with focus on Roma mission. My expectations are to join forces and to find wisdom in the Holy Spirit and make a global vision of and for the Roma church, and save the rest of 11 plus million Roma people only in Europe. Also, to build positive image of the Roma church itself among Roma people so the Roma people would grow in confidence and will increase of thinking and understanding of what God is doing among all of us.

“It was such a joy and privilege to me to be part of the consultation. It really opened my eyes to realize what God is doing among my people on global level. I want to thank God but also the Chinese church for allowing God to take them in a direction that we wouldn’t ever think of: To fight, to love and organize consultation for the world’s most rejected and despised nation. Praise God and thank you. May God bless you abundantly!”



## Pastor Miki Kamberović from Serbia says

**F**irst of all, I want to thank Dr. Thomas Wang and his wonderful Chinese team for the great work they did to put this consultation together. Their love and passion to see Roma people saved is really amazing!!!

“This consultation means a lot to Roma people in general. Coming together and seeing each other in itself is a great thing, not to mention that getting to know other Roma leaders and also non Roma that are working with Roma people. It is an opportunity to work together in the future.

“It made impact on me for sure, and yes I know that many people were impacted and encouraged to do the ministry with Roma even better.

“There more then one thing that I have learned, but if I would have to choose one, that would be unity in the work to achieve the common goal. We have a common goal and if we are united we can achieve it. There is a saying that I would like to quote, “The beginning is when

we gather, progress is when we agree, and a success is when we work together.”

“I expect to see more people, leaders, Roma and non Roma who are joining to the consultation and are willing to work together. Also I expect more open doors as we are putting together our resources. I believe that we have just started to see how we can fulfill the purpose, and that is what I have expected.

“My personal believe is that God is going to save many nations through Roma Christians. I have experienced that God is using our Roma congregation to save other nations, so I believe that if we reach the Roma people with the Gospel of Jesus, they will use the same Gospel to reach all their neighbors in many countries where we Roma people are living.”



# Unraveling the Gypsy (Roma) Myth



*Romani flag created in 1933 and accepted by the 1971 World Romani Congress*



Whatever way you choose to spell it, being “gypped” is not a good thing. It means someone has swindled you out of money. Unfortunately, the derivation of this word is from the word “gypsy.” Not only were the people of Romani culture mislabeled as people from Egypt or gypsies, the stereotypes of their culture lead to the word gyp (or jip) becoming so engrained in people’s mind very few realize it’s a racial slur.

The word “gypsy” might conjure up images of women in voluminous swishing skirts, gold bangles and colorful head scarves, telling fortunes by gazing into crystal balls, consulting tarot cards or tracing the lines of the palms of your hands.

Or maybe you think of street buskers, thieves, fortune tellers who wear jingly clothes and jewelry, and even families that inbreed. Or perhaps what you are assuming about gypsies is something much worse. There are a lot of misconceptions out there concerning the people commonly referred to as gypsies. Baby snatching is probably the most outlandish among them, but many others are more insidious, and more widely believed -- even today. But these stereotypes do an injustice to this close-knit, cultural group. We’ll explore several myths on the following pages.

## Myth #1, Gypsies Are Originally From Egypt

By their given name alone, gypsy, it is clear the Romani people were thought to have come from Egypt, while in actuality, they hail from northern

India. As early as the 11th century, this group, who referred to themselves as “rom,” which in their language simply means “man,” began to migrate out of India in frequent groups. They are thought to have originally chosen Persia as their destination, but soon found their way to Europe. Having been chased out of almost every location they settled, gypsies gained a reputation for constantly being on the move. Today, they can be found all over the world -- even in Australia.

## Myth #2, Gypsy Is a Homogenous Group

Technically, only the people descended from those original Indian immigrants would be considered actual gypsies, and they call themselves Roma or Romani. But researchers have identified about 70 sub-groups.

That subset includes groups like the Irish Travelers and the Romani (the two ethnicities recognized in British case law). Then, there are the different sub-groups who consider themselves “Romani” although they also see themselves as part of smaller, more cohesive groups. These include the Sinti, the Romanichals, the Manush and many more. For simplicity’s sake, we’ll stick with Roma, another common catch-all, from here on out, just to get our heads to stop spinning.

## Myth #3, Gypsies Are Nomadic

Not all Roma travel by caravan or other means of mobile living from site to site, migrating throughout the



seasons. In modern times, majority of the people who consider themselves Roma live in houses. Your neighbor could be a Roma and you might not even know it.

Much of the reason so many Roma do not advertise their status is because of discrimination -- quite fierce over the years and continued to this day. By only acting like their true selves around other Roma, and by staying put, some are able to avoid persecution. That guarded lifestyle does contribute to one urban legend that has at least some truth to it: The Roma are a somewhat secretive people, although that's partly changed in the modern age.

#### **Myth #4, Gypsies Are Fortune Tellers**

If you don't take the time to really understand the Romani people, you might conjure up a stereotypical picture of a gypsy woman in your head -- a woman who wears long, flowing, layered clothing whose arms are packed full of gold bangle bracelets, whose head might be covered in a scarf -- and let's not forget the ever-present crystal ball. Perhaps the most well-known of all gypsy occupations is that of the fortuneteller. While this stereotype is partially true -- many Romani women do tell fortunes for a living and often provide the main source of income for their family in doing so -- it is certainly not the only job a gypsy woman might have.

#### **Myth #5, Gypsies Trick People Out of Money**

As with any human population, there are always exceptions that prove the rule. It would be unlikely for the Roma to be any different; some Roma are surely guilty of crimes, stealing among them. But the vast majority doesn't participate in criminal activity. The idea that Roma are largely stealing and cheating is pure urban legend.

Roma culture includes unwritten laws that outline what's considered proper behavior and what's not. This complex code of conduct dictates matters such as cleanliness, purity, respect, honor and justice. It's passed down through the families of Roma communities with each new generation.

#### **Myth #6, Gypsies Live Outside of Societal Norms**

Just as their history of persecution leads to a unique approach to educating their youth, so did it

inspire the secrecy their culture is known. We really don't know very much about Romani culture, and that is because of the deliberate secrecy they instill in their people. Ever since their first migration out of India to Europe, they have been mistrusted, used as scapegoats and misunderstood. This has built a reasonable mistrust of others into their society. Thus, they do live outside normal societal norms.

But it's not because they think society laws don't apply to them. It's simply out of mistrust. They were victims of genocide and exile -- if this is all their culture knows from cultures different to them, secrecy to protect their culture is understandable. Those who misinterpret their privacy and outsider mentality for unscrupulousness are simply encouraging a stereotype that couldn't be further from the truth. On the contrary, gypsies have a very strict moral code they hold each other to.

[SOURCE: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romani\\_people](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romani_people)]





# Roma Mission: Four Responses of Eastern European Churches

Anne-Marie Kool



Although the Roma have lived among Christians for centuries, they have always been marginalized and overlooked by them. They have had to face neglect, harassment, persecution and murder. Churches in the past had been excluding Roma from their church services, refusing them sacraments and marriages. But recently many (Eastern) European churches have started to address the Roma mission question.

## 1. Response of the Ecumenical Churches – Diaconal Works, Human Rights and Social Inclusion

In 2001, the Conference of European Churches (CEC), a major ecumenical church body in Europe organized a major conference on Roma in Bratislava. The outcome of the conference emphasizes *Living in community, equal opportunities and overcoming discrimination*. With regard to making *Living in Community possible*, churches are reminded that they have been part of the history of the Roma, as the Roma have had to face neglect, harassment, persecution and murder. Therefore churches are called to acknowledge for and repent from the wrongs they did to the Roma such as excluding Roma from their church services, refusing them sacraments and marriages. It is also recommended that the churches become actively involved in the diaconal work and the empowerment of Roma.

Therefore the churches are encouraged to call upon governments and authorities who have the obligation to protect their national minorities based on justice, equal human rights and equal opportunities, and to build a community which is free from fear

and racism but of equal opportunities. The church becomes an advocate for the Roma community on anti-discrimination and social inclusion.

## 2. Response of the European Baptist Federation (EBF) – Evangelism and Community Building

The EBF's purpose is "to seek in all its endeavors to fulfil the will of Jesus Christ, Lord and Savior." Although their ministry focus is evangelism and church planting they have two major social projects: an Anti-Trafficking Network which was started in 2004 and the Project Ruth.

The Project Ruth was established in 1992. It started as a Sunday School for Roma street kids in Bucharest, and was extended into a day center. From one thing to another it became a regular school offering hot meals, hygiene and basic medical programs.

The Ruth Project is committed "to giving education to the marginalized and disadvantaged, particularly for those coming from Roma (Gypsy) families in order to help them reach their highest potential. Through education, the Ruth School seeks to assist in the inclusion of Roma in society as well as their future educational endeavors (high school, vocational schools, etc.)." Since its establishment 2000 students have been educated and taken care of.

Project Ruth now offers professional counselling to mainly Roma women, provides leadership and biblical training for leaders of Gypsy (Roma) churches. Since its initial start in 1997 over 120 Gypsy pastors, missionaries, and community leaders have been trained and continue to serve in their churches and communities.

### 3. Response of the Pentecostal Churches – Indigenous Roma Movement

Initially the complex indigenous Roma Pentecostal movement was started under the guidance and support of ethnic Bulgarian evangelical leaders, but the main responsibility for it has now largely been transferred to the Roma. The more the church is led by Roma the more indigenous it becomes.

Whereas the Bulgarian Gypsy Pentecostal movement is indigenous in nature, many other Gypsy Pentecostal communities in Eastern Europe have their roots in the Pentecostal revival among the Roma that started in 1950s in France through the ministry of Clément Le Cossec.

Le Cossec established several organizations, of which the most important is Vie et Lumière, to which about 200 Roma Churches belong. This organisation operates a Roma Bible School in Hungary (Gyöng) since 1994, also in Moscow and in even Bangalore! Le Cossec also established the Centre Missionaire Evangelique de Rom International (CMERI).

A sub-organisation is GATIEF, Gypsies and Travellers International Evangelical Fellowship, led by Rene Zanellato, working in more than 40 countries. The movement can be characterized with three main objectives: 1. Evangelism, 2. Training of co-workers and 3. Establishing of churches.

In the middle of the 1990s Le Cossec counted 6000 Gypsy preachers all over Europe. The Evangelical Gypsy movement spread out of France over the whole world. Currently more than 2 million believers belong to this movement, in 44 countries. Marc Bordigone, an anthropologist of Provence University characterizes the work of Le Cossec: “Le Cossec’s approach paradoxically enabled Gypsies to keep their identity through a faith, Christianity, that asserts what he calls a universal character.” This movement does not teach its converts to be “ashamed of being Romani; on the contrary, it tells them that they can be better Gypsies for being Christian - and better Christians for being Gypsies - for unlike the poor non-Gypsies who are tied down to one place by their houses, the Gypsy can carry his witness for Christ wherever he wanders.”

### 4. Response of the Roman Catholic Church – Acceptance and Solidarity

In 1965 a group of about 2000 Gypsies arrived from all over Europe on a pilgrimage to Rome. Their goal was to ask the Pope for official protection of their nomadic way of life. Gernot Haupt reminds us that there is one sentence that is quoted in every document since: “You are not at the margins of the church, you are – in a certain sense – in the center, you are at the heart of the church.”

A few years later Pope Paul VI established the Pontificia Commissio de Spirituali Migratorum atque Itinerantium Cura (Pontifical Council for the Pastoral Care of Migrants and Itinerant People). The purpose of the Council was to study “people on the move,” evangelize them, and provide them with appropriate spiritual shepherding. Under the auspices of this Council was the department of Pastoral Care for Gypsies, which organized several World Congresses.

A first Pastoral letter for Nomadic people in 1999 warns for the dangers of sects that push them to abandon the Church and lose their faith. Therefore religious education is needed. The document calls our attention for the positive characteristics of the Gypsy world: “such as fraternal and generous hospitality, a deep sense of solidarity, strong attachment to the faith and the religious traditions of their ancestors.” A few years later, an important document is issued, after many years of preparation. The “Guidelines for the Pastoral Care of Gypsies” deals, among others, with the issue of how to overcome suspicion, referring to what happened in the past. This document was announced in the German press under the headline of “Pope asks Sinti and Roma for forgiveness.”

Last June Pope Franciscus called attention to the Gypsies in a meeting on “The Church and Gypsies: to announce the Gospel in the peripheries,” where he emphasized that Gypsies are one of the groups most vulnerable to new forms of slavery. He called for closeness and solidarity with the Roma following the example of Jesus Christ.

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**Latin America:** 50-55% of a person's worldview is formed before age of 5. By age 12, 80% of it is formed. An agency is using finger- puppet half-hour videos to tell Bible stories to children successfully. Even one non-Spanish speaking missionary was able to reach both children and their parents. There are 5 videos with related Bible lessons, useful for a week's VBS or Sunday school program. They have dubbed the videos into over 20 languages so far in Latin America, India and Mozambique.

<Wycliffe Associates, [www.wycliffe.org](http://www.wycliffe.org), 11/3/14>

**South Asia:** 2 weeks ago, gun fire flared up on the border between India and Pakistan, afterwards a peace talk made huge headlines when an agency hosted a conference for church leaders from both nations in a third country. This was the second follow-up that began 16 months ago. At that first one, 10 delegates from each countries agreed to pray and fast every third day of each month. When they come together, they discovered the joy of common purpose, met also individually, and came away with fresh evangelistic initiatives and strategies for each of the 3 nations. They have targeted to reach each unreached people group by 2020, and committed to mentor young people called to Christian service.

<Global Advance, [www.globaladvance.org](http://www.globaladvance.org), 10/28/14>

**Indonesia:** Christians are feeling relief and delight at their newly sworn into office President Joko Widodo. He grew up in the slums of Java and rose quickly from a mayor to president. At his first parliament speech, after his traditional Muslim greeting, he greeted the Christian countrymen explaining that he is leader of all people. Christianity is one of the six religions protected by law. Yet in the largest Muslim-dominated nation, officials often are unconcerned when Christians are attacked or persecuted for their belief. Christians hope the more open and inclusive mindset of the new president will bring fewer restrictions and change of the persistent reality.

<Forgotten Missionaries International, [forgottenmissionaries.org](http://forgottenmissionaries.org), 10/29/14>

**Iran:** Gospel outreach can lead to jail term and/or other serious consequences. A stranger slipped a note to a young woman that explained the gospel and how one may accept Christ. For 8 years she ignored it until a Christian satellite channel caught her eye. She called the phone number on the screen, talked to a counselor about the gospel, and was fortunate to find a nearby house church.

<Sat-7, [www.sat7usa.org](http://www.sat7usa.org), 10/30/14>

**Iraq:** The brutal atrocities of the Islamic State (ISIS) against anyone who does not submit to them has caused thousands of Muslims and religious minorities to become refugees or

internally displaced. Coming with a worldview full of fear, Muslims find the hope in the gospel very appealing. Agencies reported that each time they tried to distribute Bibles along with blankets and food, they were 'attacked' by those eager to get a copy. It led to a severe shortage of Bibles.

<Christian Aid Mission, [www.christianaid.org](http://www.christianaid.org) 10/27/14>

**Philippines:** An agency held a concert/evangelistic meeting in an arena where 4,000 attendants each received a free Bible. A pastor/organizer said he received many calls, emails and texts concerned about not getting Bibles as they were late. There was conservatively estimated 500 people receiving Christ for the first time and hundreds rededicated life to their Lord. This is part of distributing \$3 million worth of Bibles and Christian books to the public and to those attending pastor conferences.

<Christian Resources International, [www.cribooks.org](http://www.cribooks.org), 10/31/14>

**Urbanization/Migration:** These are two big challenges facing the global Church today. About half of humanity are urbanites with the top 5 most populated cities in Asia: Tokyo, Jakarta, Delhi, Seoul and Manila. Migration is one of primary factors for the urbanization trend. UN says some 5 billion people will live in cities by 2030, and 232million people migrated. Traditional evangelism technique and strategies do not always work in a landscape constantly in flux. These are serious issues but also special gospel opportunities.

<Mission Network News, [www.mnnonline.org](http://www.mnnonline.org), 10/14/14>

**Brazil:** This is considered a developing country. While the southeast region has prospered in the last few decades, people in northeast area are very poor, without running water, with really high infant mortality and many deceases, and, worst of all, no opportunities -- educational, economical or otherwise. In addition, people live in spiritual darkness. One city is the center of African black magic which is similar to voodoo in Haiti. An agency amazingly met no resistance when they presented the gospel openly. They are able to establish child development centers in partnership with local churches. These are the only projects the small local churches can afford to participate. The centers address the spiritual, physical and emotional needs of the children.

<Mission Network News, [www.mnnonline.org](http://www.mnnonline.org), 10/17/14>

**Ukraine:** The recent national election remarkably elected 4 evangelical Baptists to the parliament. The new political party finished first along with pro-Western parties holding the majority, and its leaders, all Baptists, hold the offices of president, parliament speaker and the prime minister.

<Slavic Gospel Association, [www.sga.org](http://www.sga.org), 11/05/14>



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**2015**

## **ROMA (GYPSY) MISSION CONSULTATION**

**DATE:** September 29 to October 2, 2015

**PLACE:** Budapest, Hungary

**ORGANIZER:** Great Commission Center International

**PURPOSE:** 1. To promote Roma Mission awareness  
2. To encourage global Chinese Church to engage in Roma Missions  
3. To develop Roma Mission strategies in Eastern Europe

**LANGUAGE:** Chinese/English

**REGISTRATION:** Please download registration form from [www.gcciusa.org](http://www.gcciusa.org)

**REGISTRATION DEADLINE:** August 15, 2015

After the Consultation there will be field visitations to Roma communities and churches in Hungary, Romania, and Serbia.



## **MISSION OPPORTUNITIES and PERSONNEL RECRUITMENT**

### **2015 East European Roma (Gypsy) Short Term Mission Trip**

**DATE:** July 15 to 30, 2015

**FIELD:** Hungary, Serbia

**LEADER:** Rev. Sek Wai Lo (Interim Director of Mission Promotion, GCCI-Canada)

**PURPOSE:** 1. To learn the Romani culture and their needs  
2. To learn cross cultural service  
3. To care for the holistic needs of the Roma

**ACTIVITIES:** 1. Visit Roma villages and church ministries  
2. Help Roma in Green House agriculture and house building  
3. Lead Roma children and youth summer camps

**REGISTRATION:** Please download registration form from [www.gcciusa.org](http://www.gcciusa.org)

**REGISTRATION DEADLINE:** June 15, 2015

