

the Turgovishte Region, the Municipal Council tried to raise funds for renovating and reconstructing six of them, which risked being closed down because they did not comply with the sanitary requirements. The MSF team decided to cover the expenses for the renovation of three of them – in the villages Bozhurka, Goliamo Sokolovo and Bayachevo, which are inhabited mainly by minority groups – Turks and Roma. The renovation was completed in August 2001 and the primary healthcare units now function normally.

6. Activities planned for 2002

Throughout 2002 our activity in the Turgovishte Region will be focused on:

1. Providing free snacks for the students in Malcho Malchev District
2. Providing free medicines for the neediest patients of the primary healthcare units in the Malcho Malchev District, in Popovo and in the three villages mentioned above
3. Providing startup support for projects initiated by Roma NGOs
4. Providing funding for the proper functioning of the public bathrooms in the Roma neighborhood.

THE HEALTHCARE SERVICES MODEL OF NADEZHDA DISTRICT – SLIVEN

The Roma neighborhood in Sliven, the Nadezhda District with population of approximately 15,000, is one of the most impoverished and destitute communities in Bulgaria. 75% of the Roma living there are unemployed and have almost no health insurance at all. Until July 1, 2000 there was an understaffed and inadequately equipped polyclinic close to the ghetto, which also served the Roma community but afterwards the building was bought by an Italian businessman.

The general practitioners in Nadezhda District are Roma – Dr. Zheliazko Manolov and Dr. Stefan Panayotov who are taking care of approximately 3,000 patients. In the beginning they worked in the polyclinic in the center of the town, which is situated 4 km away from the ghetto. This severely limited the access of Roma to healthcare services because there is no public transportation and people had to walk the distance with their sickly children in their arms. Dr. Manolov and Dr. Panayotov found an alternative by opening consultation rooms in the ghetto, thus improving the access of Roma to healthcare services. The equipment of the consultation rooms was covered by the World Bank.

The two doctors say that because of the difficult economic situation and the poor hygiene and health culture of Roma the morbidity and mortality rates in the Nadezhda District have increased dramatically in the last few years. There has been also a significant increase in the number of TB cases and cerebrovascular diseases provoked by untreated hypertension, ischemic heart disease, etc. Neglected and complicated health conditions, as well as concurrence of several serious diseases, which makes treatment more difficult and more expensive, multiply. Discrimination towards Roma by some physicians is still a problem, in spite of the reforms in the healthcare system, and an increasing number of Roma in Sliven tend to seek help from doctors from their own ethnic group.

Dr. Manolov and Dr. Panayotov also informed us that the serious cases, which need hospitalization, have doubled and tripled, while the available beds in the regional hospital have been reduced significantly. The members of the Roma community cannot afford to pay the fees, the medicines and the consumables necessary for hospital treatment. Because of ethnic intolerance