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UN Community Volunteer Silvija Nestic is one of 65 Roma who UNV trained in the last three years, as part of the joint UNDP and UNHCR initiative for improved social inclusion of young Roma in Serbia.

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Roma youth for the Roma community during the COVID-19 pandemic

Young UN Volunteers Silvija, Kristina and Meti do their part in assisting their community to overcome the challenges of COVID-19 pandemic. Although they have different educational backgrounds (music, medicine and literature), all three are members of the UN Volunteer cohort in Serbia, with the mission of being the link between the Roma community and governmental institutions.

The team of UN Volunteers in Serbia comprises 65 such dedicated young Roma as Silvija, Kristina and Meti. They have been trained to become activists, fighting for the inclusion of Roma, against discrimination and social injustice and supporting the vulnerable members of the Roma community.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, these young Roma have been dispersed throughout Serbia

and are actively working within their communities to deliver emergency aid packages, ensure health assistance, enable access to drinking water or help people obtain the personal documents (e.g. identification documentation, birth and marriage certificates) needed to acquire health insurance or claim social welfare.

Silvija, Kristina and Meti were trained in the last three years, as part of the joint initiative of the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR) for improved social inclusion of young Roma. They are true role models in their communities.

Silvija Nestic is a 25-year-old graduate of the Faculty of Arts in Nis, soon to be a Master of Musical Arts. She helps Roma community members to access and fulfil their social rights, especially focusing on women and new mothers. She has also trained 30 new volunteers in her hometown, Pirot, and is a strong link between local governmental institutions and her community. Silvija finds that significant progress has been accomplished in education, but employment of young Roma is a goal yet to be achieved.

“ Even highly educated young people in Serbia, especially Roma, are still financially dependent on their parents. Personal and professional development, following your dreams and trying to learn from your own mistakes, persistence in pursuing young goals, will bring you closer to where you want to be. --Silvija Nestic, UN Community Volunteer

Kristina Asanovic is 26 and already a young doctor, volunteering at the COVID-19 clinic in Nis. She has been volunteering on the front line, working with more than 150 patients per day, under heavy protective garment, mask, helmet, gloves. Every day, she comes back to her home with her parents, who are chronic pulmonary patients, as well as her sister-in-law, who is pregnant. This poses a great challenge and worry for her, but she is brave and dedicated.

“ It is very important to follow your inner self, and not succumb to community pressure. Education helps you grow not only intellectually, but also adds to your emotional and personal growth. -- Kristina Asanovic, UN Community Volunteer



Kristina Asanovic, UN Community Volunteer. ©UNDP, 2020

Meti Kamberi is 19, a young man who grew up in an orphanage and learned how to read only seven years ago. Today, he is a bestselling writer, whose book *Grad bola (City of Pain)* has reached its third edition. He is an example of ambition and hard work, and shows how one can rise from the bottom if one has a clear goal always in front of one's eyes.

Meti is from Nis, but when interviewed by national and local media in Serbia, he uses the opportunity to speak publicly, and is an unofficial spokesman for the Roma, young people and disadvantaged groups throughout Serbia. An excellent motivator, he inspires young people to search for more and be actively involved in helping others.

“ I’m rooting for people. Young people need to work on themselves and shouldn't wait for someone else to fight their battles. Good deeds speak more than words. –Meti Kamberi, UN Community Volunteer



Meti Kamberi, UN Community Volunteer. ©UNDP, 2020

The trained group of UN Volunteers are finalizing the campaign '*Young people in action are not a myth – COVID-19 occurred*', which will produce a short documentary to be presented on social media.

The group of UN Volunteers will also continue their committed work in local organizations and institutions.

Europe and the CIS

• Roma • UN Community Volunteers • COVID-19 • Coronavirus • International Day for the Eradication of Poverty

Sustainable Development Goal: [SDG 1: No poverty](#) [SDG 10: Reduced inequalities](#) [SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals](#)