



## **Realising Women's Right to Health in Ireland**

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### **Testimony 2: Monika Makulova, Roma project, Pavee Point Travellers Centre**

I would like to talk to you about Roma women's health – this is from my own experiences and Roma women that I meet through my work. The biggest problem for Roma women is the Habitual Residence Condition, because that's why many women have no access to money and have no medical cards. This means many Roma women live in poverty and have poor health.

Living conditions are also a big problem. There is a woman that is coming to see me nearly every day that lives in a flat. She has rats in her flat and damp. And I know there are a lot of other people who live in the same condition and they have no power to do nothing about it. And you could imagine what kind of feeling it is like to bring into that kind of flat a newborn baby or how bad it is for children's health.

Another big problem is racism. I can give you some examples of this in health services. A woman came to see me and she needed a GP and I brought her to my GP and she had no problem. The doctor accepted her. About a week after, another woman came to me with the same problem, that she was looking for a GP and I knew that my GP was accepting people. I brought her to him and he refused her. What was the difference between them? It was that the second woman was wearing a skirt. And I knew that he was looking for clients, because he mentioned this to me when I had seen him with the first woman, but when he saw that the second woman was wearing a skirt, he said sorry, Monika, we are full.

It's very hard for many Roma to trust the Irish health system because of our situation back home. I would like to tell you about forced sterilisation, people being sterilised without knowing. For example, my sister was sterilised without her knowing, after her second child. She got divorced from her first husband, she has married a second time and this is now affecting all her life.

How can we expect Roma people to trust health services? So this is why we have to build up trust. We need Roma employed in services. I want to tell you that my community (the Roma community) is dying younger than other communities, which is sad – This is why I think that the Irish government have to start paying attention, now.