

Engage Mission Moment

November 2014

A Family Transformed: New Life and Business Through Christ

Instructions:

Show this PowerPoint slideshow to your congregation or small group while you read the below script to narrate each slide.

Slide 1

Title Slide.

Slide 2

The Roma, or gypsy, people in Bulgaria live on the fringes of Bulgarian society, often living in disadvantaged conditions. More than 300,000 people in Bulgaria, a formerly Communist eastern European country, are identified as Roma, about 5 percent of the population.

According to a 1997 survey, 84 percent of Bulgarian Roma live under the poverty line, compared with 32 percent of the overall Bulgarian population.

Roma people struggle with lack of education, unemployment, lack of land ownership, and cultural values that undermine the nuclear family and stability for their children.

Slide 3

Sergo Slavchov and his wife Daniella are a Roma couple who had struggled financially just like everyone in their region of Bulgaria, which is the most depressed region of the entire European Union. Being Roma – cultural outcasts in Bulgaria – didn't help them. Like most Roma, they did not own their own land or home, and worked undesirable jobs to make ends meet. Sergo worked in a dangerous factory job that exposed him to poisonous substances, resulting in the loss of some of his teeth.

As was customary in the Roma culture, he also drank a lot and slept with many women, and fought with Daniella.

They tried to have children for 18 years. Finally, in spite of being very poor, they decided to adopt – a beautiful baby girl they named Nadia.

Slide 4

Not long after they adopted Nadia, a friend invited them to visit the Montana Church of the Nazarene, in northwest Bulgaria.

“We really liked it,” says Sergo. “The first week after I heard the words about Jesus, I had this warmth inside my heart and I believed that truly there was something.”

Life for the ethnically Roma couple suddenly improved when they became believers. That was five years ago.

Slide 5

After they found Christ, everything changed. Sergo became a faithful husband.

“We share with each other. And there’s more peace between us and tranquility,” he says.

“When they came to the church they were pretty rough people, I would say. Especially him,” says Valeri Munelska, the pastor of the Montana Church of the Nazarene. “When God started working in their lives, I saw a change at the very root. They became an example of a good family.”

Filled with joy in their new faith, the couple immediately wanted to give back. Munelska says that periodically they would volunteer to cook for the congregation, providing hot soup lunches or fried bread after church.

Slide 6

Soon they both found better, regular jobs at an Italian agricultural company, picking berries during the harvest season, about six months per year. Sergo became the manager of a team of workers. Through the counsel of the pastor, they made wiser choices. Their finances began to improve.

Slide 7

Then the miracle happened. Daniella became pregnant.

“We had such a great joy, we were so happy,” Daniella says. “He was working in the fields when I told him the news. Everyone was so happy and they cried with joy. Eighteen years – that’s a long time. And people we would meet on the streets would hug us and kiss us with joy.”

They named their second daughter Maria, after the mother of Jesus.

Slide 8

Through their joy and peace, and the miracle of their child, the couple has become a testimony to the Roma community in which they live.

“Everybody knows we’re believers. Most of my workers are from here, this neighborhood, or relatives. In the fields we sit and I share with them about the Lord,” Sergo says.

Slide 9

Even though their work of harvesting berries only lasts six months of every year, God blessed the family financially so that they were able to purchase the home they were renting, as well as to begin helping others and donating to the church more generously.

Slide 10

They believe in giving back to the community.

This past month they started serving soup to their neighbors in the Roma village where they live. More than 200 people (children included) covered their garden area – many sitting on blankets and the tables and chair had long run out. The Montana church helped with some of the costs and in the serving.

Slide 11

When their church decided to open a Nazarene compassionate ministry center called New Opportunities, the couple were the first in line. The center is designed to assist applicants in gaining access to European Union grants for starting small businesses. With the help of consultants at the center, Sergo and Daniella registered as agricultural producers and were awarded capital to purchase three acres of land as well as fruit trees to start an orchard.

Owning property is another miracle for their family.

“The Bulgarians, they have land, everybody does, but the Roma don’t; we don’t have work. My grandfather and great grandfather never had land. I am one of the first people in my lineage that’s ever bought land and I bought 12 decares (three acres).”

Slide 12

They have big dreams for their future.

“I want to have a big freezer that would freeze fruit for wild berries and a drier that would dry herbs to make tea. We would do also nuts as well. And for me to have 20 workers that would work just for me. I want us to grow and I want us to have 100 decares (24 acres).”

Slide 13

“I’m sure that God is with me and that I can do this and I see that I am reaching these goals and that the Lord is the best. I know that the Lord is with us and He’s never going to leave us.”

Slide 14

If you would like to read other inspiring stories of transformation around the world, check out Engagemagazine.com, where you can find new stories and

articles published every week about how God is working through His people to change lives and communities.