

Bojana Vranić

Department of Social Policy and Social Work, Faculty of Philosophy, University of Niš, Serbia, <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5839-3781>

Petar Vranić

Mathematical Institute of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts, Belgrade, Serbia, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9671-992X>

Tadija Mitić

National Coalition for Decentralization

FROM POLICY TO PRACTICE: A RESOURCE-BASED ASSESSMENT OF ACCESS TO HUMAN RIGHTS

Abstract

This study focuses on rudimentary disparities in access to human rights in Serbia, concerned with the severe divide between policy frameworks and their locative implementation. The purpose is to apply a resource-based approach to assess how public resources influence access to basic rights. Within a human rights-based approach framework, we identified and explored the presence or absence of resources that enable the realization of the right to work and the right to health. Field surveys and statistical sources served as the principal means of data collection while the investigation was conducted in 69 local communities within the City of Niš, where the indicators were evaluated and normalized by using the comparative scale. In the unbalanced distribution of public resources necessary for the actualization of rights lie the imperatives for travel, kindergartens, schools, health establishments, and pharmacies, with vulnerable groups such as children, women, the elderly, and persons with disabilities suffering most due to the absence of these resources. Without the infrastructure support at community levels or with its little presence, realization of even the most basic human rights is heavily restricted, despite comprehensive legal and policy commitments. The resource-based approach can serve as a feasible measure to pinpoint local disparities in access to human rights.

Keywords: HRBA, accessibility to human rights, local community, resource-based analysis, GIS

Introduction

Most definitions of social work emphasize the commitment of this profession to the “promotion and realization of Human Rights” (IFSW, 2010, Hermans & Roets, 2020; Stamm, 2023; Razon & Feldman, 2024). Namely, this practice-based profession, guided by the principles of social justice, non-discrimination, human rights, and collective responsibility, strives to provide support to individuals, groups, and communities to meet a need or exercise a right (IFSW, 2014, Acha-Anyi, 2024). In the context of this definition, it is important to note that unlike human needs, which can be subjective and objective, and can be ranked according to different criteria, human rights are indivisible, equally important, and the fulfilment of one right usually depends on the realization of other rights (Ife, 2010; Gabel, 2016). The complexity of the requirements for fulfilling human rights, along with their interrelated nature, prompts some writers to contend that human rights are frequently overlooked in social work. To prevent this from happening, Human Rights-based approaches can be a good way for social work to pay deserved attention to human rights (McPherson, Jebert, & Siebert, 2017; Androff, 2018; Mapp, McPherson, Androff, & Gabel, 2019). Some authors argue that precisely “human rights provide the mandate to fulfil human needs with social policy acting as the means for attaining them. Consequently, social workers can play major roles in ensuring that with policy and practice, needs are reframed and treated as basic human rights to which each individual is entitled” (Cox & Pardasani, 2017: 99). Lorenz (2016) highlights that social workers have the responsibility to reframe personal challenges as public matters.

Human rights have been a major pillar of the United Nations’ activity since its inception in 1945. By ratifying the UN Charter, they established a new normative age in which the international community, inspired by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, defined a significant set of international standards critical to the dignified living of all people. The human rights-based approach (HRBA) is a conceptual framework based on international norms for promoting and protecting human rights. For everyone to enjoy these rights and for development progress to be realized, this method helps to assess inequities and remove discriminatory behavior that entail the risk that certain social groups are excluded from the allocation of power and that their rights are neglected (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2006; Banik, 2010).

In other words, HRBA principles enable the most vulnerable individuals and groups in society to participate in decision-making processes and hold those in power accountable (UN Sustainable Development Group, 2003; Gabel, 2016; Broberg & Sano, 2017). In social work, this approach is one “that places the principles and standards of human rights as central to all aspects of service planning, policy, and practice” (European Network of National Human Rights Institutions, 2017: 14).

The HRBA principle is founded on five essential values of human rights (PAN-EL): participation, responsibility, non-discrimination and equality, empowerment, and legality. Social work aims to fulfil everyone's rights by advocating for human rights, empowering individuals, developing practices, and mobilizing resources in the community (Hermans & Roets 2020; Hessle 2016). According to Broberg and Sano (2017), implementing principles or values in practice might be challenging due to their abstract nature.

Accessibility to human rights and challenges in measurement in the context of Republic of Serbia

Access to human rights refers to the extent to which everyone, regardless of personal traits, can successfully exercise and enjoy their fundamental rights and liberties. The most important prerequisite for enjoying and maintaining rights is the removal of barriers (political, legal, administrative, physical, etc.). Accessibility of human rights also refers to the notion that certain human rights, particularly economic, social, and cultural rights, frequently necessitate the availability of material resources in order for individuals to realize and enjoy those rights. These resources encompass both material and infrastructural factors required for individuals to exercise their rights (Balakrishnan & Elson, 2008).

The availability and equitable distribution of these resources are critical in ensuring that human rights are more than just theoretical ideas, but also tangible realities for all members of society. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights' 2012 publication, "Indicators of Human Rights: Guide to Measurement and Implementation," emphasizes the importance of measuring human rights because "if something is not calculated, it tends to go unnoticed" or "what gets measured gets done" (OHCHR, 2012:4). This book focuses on increasing the number of interested parties in human rights measurement and developing methods to demonstrate the implementation of human rights in a "tangible" form in a specific location. These strategies use a diverse collection of statistical data to define indicators or indices of human rights (Landman & Carvalho, 2010). Analysing existing human rights metrics reveals that regional and national perspectives on these statistics are mostly prevalent. There are several examples of measuring human rights achievement or violation based on a comparative model of different countries, with international accords in this field serving as instructions.

The previous guide acknowledges the necessity of creating methodologies and specialized tools designed to effectively communicate the accessibility of human rights to a broad audience. By doing so, often theoretical notions (like freedom, equality, and justice) can turn into more tangible ones, thereby becoming more approachable for different parties who can support the advancement of human rights through requests for data. While there are several suggestions for tailoring human

rights measurements to particular national situations, these adaptations are primarily compared at the national level despite the contextual specifics. For example, since 2006, the Human Rights Council has been auditing human rights in all member states of the United Nations every four and a half years. Besides this method of overseeing the establishment and safeguarding of human rights, it is suggested that the enforcement of human rights also be monitored at the subnational level. Some of the suggestions for achieving this are emphasized in the guide referenced earlier. First, identify the so-called vulnerable groups in the observed territory; next, prioritize the right to equality and non-discrimination. In this context, the writers underline the distinction between accessibility and availability. More specifically, it is not enough to make some resources available (to exist in a community); they must be accessible to everyone, regardless of their specific characteristics. To effectively oversee access to a right, it is essential to recognize that this concept encompasses physical, economic, and non-discriminatory aspects (OHCHR, 2012).

All of this highlights the possible flaws in current approaches to human rights implementation. One of the most significant drawbacks of the presented measuring methods is the territorial representation of these data. Specifically, past observations of human rights almost do not allow for a more fine-grained analysis than the state. Regardless of the state's territorial size, the picture of human rights realization could be viewed through more compact units (such as local self-government units or even settlements), allowing for a finer overview of human rights realization rather than just information on whether the state is meeting predefined benchmarks (Landman 2004; Mohorović, 2006).

Table 2 lists the rights and the public resources that promote their realization. Naturally, this is not an authoritative list, and it can be customized to a specific circumstance.

Republic of Serbia uses a different technique for evaluating the situation of human rights. One of the most important frameworks for measuring progress is the United Nations Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review (UPR). Serbia's human rights situation will be examined for the fourth time in 2023 (previously in 2008, 2013, and 2018). This assessment's data sources are: the state's national report; reports from independent experts and human rights groups (such as Special Procedures, human rights treaty bodies, and other UN bodies); and information provided by other interested parties, including national human rights institutions, regional organizations, and civil society.

One of the recommendations for Serbia based on this assessment underlines the lack of valid and verified data indicating potential development in this area. From report to report, this body's recommendation is repeated: Serbia should begin desegregating data on the implementation of various public policies, as well as the effects of regulatory application on the realization of the rights of the most discrim-

inated social groups (UNHRC, 2023). Serbia has had uneven regional development since the beginning of the twenty-first century. This trend has created a significant gap between the country's south and north.

Article 94 of the Republic of Serbia's 2006 Constitution requires the state to achieve balanced regional development, with a focus on developing underdeveloped areas. The degree of development of the region is calculated using the national average of GDP per capita, whereas the degree of development of local self-government units (LGUs) is determined using basic and corrective indicators of LGU economic development (Regulation on establishing the uniform list Regional developments and local units of self-government for the year 2014). These and comparable metrics are limited to the LGU level, making it difficult to gain a realistic understanding of uneven growth at territorial levels below the LGU level. As a result of the lack of instruments for measuring the key elements of communities, in addition to the trend of uneven regional growth, a tendency of unequal development can be noticed at the level of local governments throughout Serbia.

Certainly, systemic multi-criteria monitoring is required to understand a territorial unit, both in terms of its growth and human rights. In Serbia, there is no established approach for systematic monitoring and analysis of territorial units smaller than LGUs. By the foregoing, the goal of this work is to provide deeper insights into the accessibility of human rights at the lowest geographical level, i.e. local communities. The objective is to provide a less abstract picture of the implementation of human rights, specifically to better understand if and how certain oppressed groups might obtain normatively guaranteed rights through the lens of physical resources within communities.

The City of Niš, in southeastern Serbia, is the administrative center of the Nišava administrative district and the country's third largest city, after Belgrade and Novi Sad. In 2004, it was separated into five municipalities: Mediana, Palilula, Pantelei, Crveni Krst, and Niška Banja. These municipalities differ in size and population. Mediana, with its 16 km², is geographically the smallest municipality, but has the highest population, 82,360. Niška Banja, the largest municipality in Niš, has the smallest population.

These municipalities also differ in terms of population distribution. Mediana has a high urban population, while Niška Banja is predominantly rural. Other municipalities show similar variances, with particular such as the age structure of the population in Rautovo and Bancarevo, as well as the absence of residents in Koritnjak. The Roma are the most represented national minority in the City of Niš, primarily residing in the municipalities of Palilula and Crveni Krst. However, accurate data from local communities is not available. These and other municipal specificities highlight the need to consider the development, potential, and realization of human rights at the level of a territorial unit smaller than a municipality, emphasizing the

importance of taking into account the needs of the population in their local communities in order to conduct adequate analysis, develop policies, and resources to meet those needs. In Mediana, only 4,642 people live in non-urban settlements, while in Niška Banja, the majority (10,300) dwell in such settlements. Within these five municipalities, there are 69 rural settlements (Figure 1). Local communities, like municipalities, are not uniform, and their unique characteristics can be studied. For instance, Rautovo and Bancarevo have the highest average age of 69 years, whereas Pasi Poljana, Donja Vrežina, and Donji Komren have an average age of 38 years.

Such municipal specificities suggest that assessing the implementation of human rights, for example, is best done at a spatial level smaller than a local self-government unit. Specifically, focusing solely on regional factors, including LGUs, can lead to a pattern of neglecting uneven development and failing to address the needs of the population where they are most easily expressed—in their community.

It is vital to note that in the Republic of Serbia, local governments do not maintain registries of specific categories of inhabitants, monitor their requirements, and manage their budgets appropriately. Furthermore, there is no accurate data on people with impairments at the republic level, therefore two censuses of citizens yielded an odd outcome. According to the 2011 census, the share of this population was little less than 8%, and by 2022, it was only 5.46%. Aside from any flaws in data gathering methodology, this variance in statistics is not adequately explained. This raises the possibility that, based on this evidence, allocations for this social group will be cut off. At the LGU level, this leads to additional issues, such as in 2022, when the officials of the City of Nis were astonished by the stated number of children who had recommendation to use the service of a personal companion (Personal Assistant). Furthermore, centers for social work (established by LGUs) collect data on services delivered based solely on the type of service and age category, therefore more comprehensive analytics or spatial distribution of those services are unknown. In this regard, it appears that important data are frequently missing or are not collected methodologically in order to lead to advocacy or policy planning that responds to citizens' expressed needs, all with the ultimate goal of prohibiting discrimination and ensuring equal access to rights for all citizens. Using this research as an example, we shall demonstrate that data on national minorities at the observed level are not available, hence it is impossible to assess their access to rights in terms of physical resources.

Methodology

As previously stated, the purpose of this study is to assess the accessibility of human rights at the local community level using an examination of public resources. The purpose of this methodology is to develop indicators in order to acquire a better understanding of human rights accessibility at the lowest territorial and local

government levels. Accessibility of human rights refers to the reality that certain human rights (hereafter Rights), particularly economic, social, and cultural rights, frequently necessitate the availability of material resources that persons can realize and enjoy. These resources encompass both material and infrastructural factors required for individuals to exercise their rights. As LGUs are responsible for supplying all communities with physical resources, which are often a necessity for the implementation of multiple rights, we may evaluate those resources, and thus how much a specific LGU is dedicated to the problem of human rights and their protection.

In this step, it is necessary to select relevant rights in accordance with the local context that will be the subject matter of research. The list can also be expanded if there are objective needs.

In this methodology, indicators of accessibility of Rights are viewed through the availability of public resources for their realization, the focus being on empirical indicators. Empirical indicators play a vital role in policy research and analysis by providing concrete and verifiable data that can inform decision-making and contribute to a deeper understanding of various phenomena. Without the idea of denying the importance of normative indicators, it seems just as important at the level of smaller communities to see to what extent the bearers of the duties of providing and protecting human rights fulfil their obligations, as well as to what extent the holders of rights have the preconditions for access to these rights. This tendency favours the need to develop not only universal indicators in this area, but also those that are specific to individual countries or individual communities. Table 2 presents the examples of the list of rights and corresponding public resources contributing to their realization, while the following text provides an explanation of how the listed resources contribute to the realization of rights. This is surely not a definitive list and can be adapted to a specific context. In this step, it is necessary to identify local public resources for the corresponding rights.

This step, in accordance with the approach, defines indicators of public resources for measuring the accessibility of rights. For instance, the existence of a preschool for children under the age of seven represents access to the right to education, whereas for mothers it represents access to the right to work, because the possibility of children staying in a preschool for several hours allows mothers to enter the labour market.

After defining the territorial level for analysis, the target social groups for which access to the Right will be measured are determined in this step. The methodology can be implemented to assess the accessibility of the Right for all members of the observed community, or for specific social groups. The list of target groups may include the following categories: women, children, elderly population, disabled people, national minorities, stateless persons, migrants, sexual minorities (LGBT +

community), members of certain religious communities, etc. This list is not exhaustive and may be modified according to local needs.

To measure the accessibility to rights, it is necessary to adopt a system of evaluating indicators of public resources. Examples of assessment for the previously mentioned indicators are presented in this chapter. They are certainly not unambiguous and can be adapted.

The existence of a resource does not necessarily mean the full exercise of a certain right. Resources can support partial or complete access to a right, so ratings for each of the resources have been formed accordingly. Also, their rating can be adapted to the given context. A three-level scale is used to assess the achievement of resource indicators: a) indicator not applicable (NA), b) indicator not achieved (0), c) indicator partially achieved (1), d) indicator fully achieved (2) (Table 1).

Example of indicator assessment:

Table 1 Drinking water

	Achievement of resource indicators	Rationale
NA	indicator not applicable	
0	indicator not achieved	There is no piped drinking water in the community. Residents get water from wells
1	indicator partially achieved	A part of the population has a piped drinking water in the community (in %)
2	indicator fully achieved	There is piped drinking water in all households in the community (in %)

We evaluate the degree of manifestation of public resources and calculate accessibility indicators for individual rights based on the predetermined values.

For each observed right, the graded of achieving individual indicators of public resources was assessed. Normalizing the indicator values makes it easy to compare the sum of separate indicators. This methodology makes use of the Min-Max normalization method (OECD, 2008). This approach normalizes indications to a range of 0–1, as indicated in the equation below:

$$IP_{x,0-1} = \frac{I_{Px} - I_{Pmin}}{I_{Pmax} - I_{Pmin}}$$

IP_x represents the individual value of the indicator, IP_{min} represents the minimum value in the observed set of values, IP_{max} represents the maximum value in the observed set of values, and IP_x is the normalized value of the indicator in the range of 0-1. The technique was repeated for each individual right, culminating in the ultimate accessibility metric. All rights are listed below, together with descriptions of the appropriate public resources and a visualization of the findings.

Limitations

Human rights, as evaluated at the community level, cannot be compared to higher management entities. Furthermore, such a rigorous assessment of human rights accessibility, which would finally be implemented at the national level, would necessitate a significant investment of both material and human resources. Since the process for collecting statistical data on the population is changing, legitimate data may not always reflect the representation of specific target groups, which must be validated by cross-examination.

Results

This section presents the findings for both rights under study—the right to work and the right to health—integrating all analytical steps: the selection of rights and corresponding public resources (Table 2), the definition of target groups and study area (Fig. 1; Table 3), the scoring of resource indicators (Tables 4–5), and the calculation and comparison of accessibility indices across 69 local communities. To improve readability, results are reported as a single narrative. In addition to the spatial distributions already shown (Fig. 2 and Fig. 3), Fig. 4 serves as an illustrative example of how the availability and quality of concrete resources shape differences in accessibility.

The Right to Work

The right to work is a fundamental human right that allows an individual to freely choose employment, workplace, or occupation without discrimination; to work under fair and favourable conditions; to receive fair compensation for work performed; and to access other aspects of employment such as rest, health care, and unemployment protection, in accordance with applicable laws and international conventions.

Table 2

Rights	Resources	Data Source
The Right to Work	Organized Public Transport (OPT)	Public Transport Directorate Niš
	Frequency of Organized Public	Public Transport Directorate Niš
	Educational institutions	Field Survey
	Signal from mobile operators (SMO)	Regulatory Authority for Electronic Communications and Postal Services
	Post office	Field Survey
The Right to Health	Healthcare facility	Field Survey
	Pharmacy	Field Survey
	Sports fields	Field Survey

Organized Public Transport (OPT) and Frequency of Organized Public Transportation (FOPT). Adequate public transportation can be crucial in allowing people to access job opportunities. Many people rely on it as their primary mode of transportation to get to work. Increased frequency makes it easier for workers to go to and from work, boosting the availability of job and company opportunities. It also makes it easier for firms to recruit qualified workers from the city's outskirts, so helping to economic development and lowering unemployment in the identified local towns.

Kindergarten and School. Kindergartens for preschool-aged children allow mothers to enter the labour market while local institutions care for the children. Schools also act as possible workplaces for several of the observed categories.

Post office. Access to mail can be a valuable resource during the hiring process, including the ability to submit applications, employment contracts, and other work-related messages. Furthermore, the post office allows you to send and receive business offers, invoices, items, and other business materials, which boosts commercial activity in areas far from the city center.

Signal from mobile operators (SMO). Internet access is becoming increasingly vital for locating and applying for jobs. It provides people of remote settlements with access to online job search platforms and the ability to participate in virtual interviews, as well as the option to work from home, which simplifies the employment and work process by eliminating the need for physical presence in city. Individuals without dependable Internet access may be at a disadvantage in the employment process, thus denying them the right to work. Define vulnerable groups. To present the instance of the City of Niš, we specified the target categories for whom the accessibility of rights was monitored. Initially, five target categories (vulnerable groups) were identified: women, children, the impoverished, the disabled, and national minorities. To determine the relevance of the selected categories, i.e., whether members of the selected categories exist in the observed communities, a demographic study was performed using Statistical Office of the Republic of Serbia (SORS) data, i.e., the census book (census table) for the year 2022 (Table 3). The study revealed that there is no data regarding national minorities at this spatial level, hence the category was eliminated from further consideration. For the adopted target groups, access to the right is assessed if the criterion that there is at least one member of the observed target group in the local community is met, i.e., the indication of the need for a given resource is met.

The Right to Health

The right to health is a fundamental human right that ensures that everyone has equal access to the best possible physical and mental health, including the right to health care, medical services, prevention, treatment, and rehabilitation in accordance with national and international human rights standards.

Healthcare facility. The presence of health centers in the community reflects a commitment to attaining this right by ensuring that citizens may access basic medical services, preventive care, and therapy.

Pharmacy. The pharmacy operation gives people of rural communities' access to medicines and medical items without having to drive to the city center, making basic medical care and therapy more accessible. Furthermore, the existence of pharmacies can aid in disease prevention by giving people of remote settlements with health information and guidance, so improving overall health conditions in those places.

Sports fields. Sports fields and playgrounds give the local population with an accessible and active way to spend their leisure time, encouraging physical activity and maintaining a healthy lifestyle. sporting grounds provide the opportunity to organize sporting events and tournaments in the local community, which promotes social connection and mental health. Sports grounds can also be used to organize health programs and workshops, as well as instructional activities about the value of regular physical activity in maintaining good health.

To analyze these rights, a complete field survey of available public resources was done, as well as an examination of resource availability in 69 local communities (Figure 1), to ensure an even distribution of public resources for a fair comparison of Rights (Table 1). The analysis revealed that all settlements (local communities) under consideration in this study fit the criteria listed above.



Fig. 1 Study area

In the case of the City of Niš, the target groups for which the accessibility of rights was observed were defined. Initially, we identified five vulnerable groups: women, children, the poor, people with disabilities, and national minorities. In order to check the relevance of the selected categories, i.e., whether there are members of the selected categories in the observed communities, a demographic analysis was conducted based on Statistical Office of The Republic of Serbia data, the census book for 2022 (Table 3). After the analysis, it was determined that there are no data for national minorities at this spatial level, and accordingly, the category of national minorities was excluded from further consideration. For the adopted target groups, access to the right is analyzed if the condition that there is at least one member of the observed target group in the local community is met, i.e., the indicator of the need for a certain resource is met (if there is one child, there is also a need to exercise the right to education).

Table 3 The demographic profile of the observed communities

Community	Children	Women 20-65	Women 65+	elderly people	Persons with disability	Total
Bancarevo	0	7	23	47	0	66
Berbatovo	39	87	48	83	9	327
Bercinac	13	26	17	31	0	105
Brenica	101	163	45	83	3	522
Brzi brod	895	1525	363	505	50	4842
Bubanj	125	170	43	90	0	548
Čamurlija	105	183	52	91	16	554
Cerje	28	40	45	82	6	212
Čokot	307	423	114	231	17	1412
Čukljenik	37	62	42	76	3	247
Deveti Maj	1058	1525	352	670	62	4795
Donja Studena	54	74	40	73	0	290
Donja Toponica	49	97	41	76	6	324
Donja Trnava	109	184	93	165	18	647
Donja Vrezina	1451	2337	367	733	101	6758
Donje Međurovo	356	519	152	286	25	1722
Donje Vlase	31	80	45	83	2	254

Donji Komren	408	594	125	253	0	1838
Donji Matejevac	140	235	104	184	18	831
Gabrovac	220	387	133	250	29	1238
Gornja Studena	55	78	49	93	7	322
Gornja Toponica	131	316	124	211	8	1127
Gornja Trnava	42	72	38	82	4	286
Gornja Vrežina	222	330	118	232	0	1147
Gornje Međurovo	187	305	96	181	18	1011
Gornji Komren	178	284	71	146	8	917
Gornji Matejevac	453	760	262	503	45	2513
Hum	262	427	129	234	13	1370
Jasenovik	78	114	40	79	5	396
Jelašnica	321	463	182	323	20	1590
Kamenica	831	1167	288	551	16	3745
Knez Selo	133	247	127	238	12	865
Koritnjak	0	0	0	0	0	0
Kravlje	31	54	95	169	3	327
Krušce	166	236	82	30	13	831
Kunovica	2	10	18	30	0	49
Lalinac	376	506	195	356	23	1806
Lazarevo Selo	31	39	10	33	1	149
Leskovik	36	55	41	67	9	248
Malča	167	291	130	249	17	1030
Manastir	1	1	0	0	0	6
Medoševac	561	808	282	494	46	2674
Mezgraja	93	165	58	91	12	541
Miljkovac	25	58	23	48	3	182
Mramor	112	200	71	115	9	635
Mramorski Potok	66	95	38	76	9	337

Nikola Tesla	950	1460	371	701	59	4651
Niška Banja	2710	4368	1575	885	82	14680
Oreovac	31	72	48	98	2	299
Ostrovica	77	116	76	144	15	475
Paligrace	40	58	56	111	7	269
Paljina	45	68	31	57	3	234
Pasi Poljana	672	979	174	339	50	2938
Pasjača	21	51	52	91	2	219
Popovac	618	842	268	463	55	2847
Prosek	90	169	77	147	6	599
Prva Kutina	172	272	107	202	15	956
Radikina Bara	12	17	6	11	0	60
Rautovo	0	2	5	8	0	12
Ravni Do	4	7	18	31	4	56
Rujnik	89	137	63	123	11	490
Sečanica	103	215	99	183	16	768
Sićevo	123	240	92	175	17	772
Supovac	37	103	56	93	11	344
Suvi Do	189	333	91	171	12	1010
Trupale	440	614	226	425	40	2127
Vele Polje	60	108	85	155	10	454
Vrelo	33	64	35	56	7	225
Vrtište	213	336	101	196	15	1112
Vukmanovo	49	86	51	93	6	340

This step, in accordance with the Methodology, defines indicators of public resources for measuring the accessibility of Rights (Table 4 and Table 5). For different target groups, the same public resource can mean access to different rights (for example, the existence of a preschool institution for children represents access to the right to education, while for mothers it represents access to the right to work).

Table 4 Achievement of resource indicators for Right to work

Achievement of resource indicators		Rationale
Organized public transport (OPT)		
0	indicator not achieved	There is no OPT in the community
1	indicator partially achieved	There is OPT in the community, but it is not adapted (there is no a reserved space for pregnant women and women with children, a low platform for entering the bus, access for wheelchairs and the elderly is provided)
2	indicator fully achieved	There is a fully adapted OPT in the community (there is a reserved space for pregnant women and women with children, a low platform for entering the bus, access for wheelchairs and the elderly is provided)
Frequency* of the organized public transport (OPT)		
0	indicator not achieved	There is no OPT in the community
1	indicator partially achieved	There is a low-frequency OPT in the community
2	indicator fully achieved	There is a satisfactory frequency OPT in the community
Educational institutions – kindergartens and preschool institutions		
0	indicator not achieved	There is no kindergarten in the community
1	indicator partially achieved	There is a kindergarten in the community, but it does not have an access for pedestrians and wheelchair users
2	indicator fully achieved	There is a kindergarten in the community with an access for pedestrians and wheelchair users
Post office		
0	indicator not achieved	There is no post office in the community
1	indicator partially achieved	There is a post office in the community, but it does not have an ramp for pedestrian and wheelchair users
2	indicator fully achieved	There is a post office in the community, with an ramp for pedestrian and wheelchair users
Signal of mobile operators (SMO)		
0	indicator not achieved	There is an unsatisfactory SMO in the community
1	indicator partially achieved	There is a satisfactory SMO in the community
2	indicator fully achieved	There is a good or excellent SMO in the community

*frequency is based on departures per number of inhabitants (per 1000 inhabitants)

**the signal of the mobile operators is seen as an average of the signal quality taking into account all present mobile operators in the community

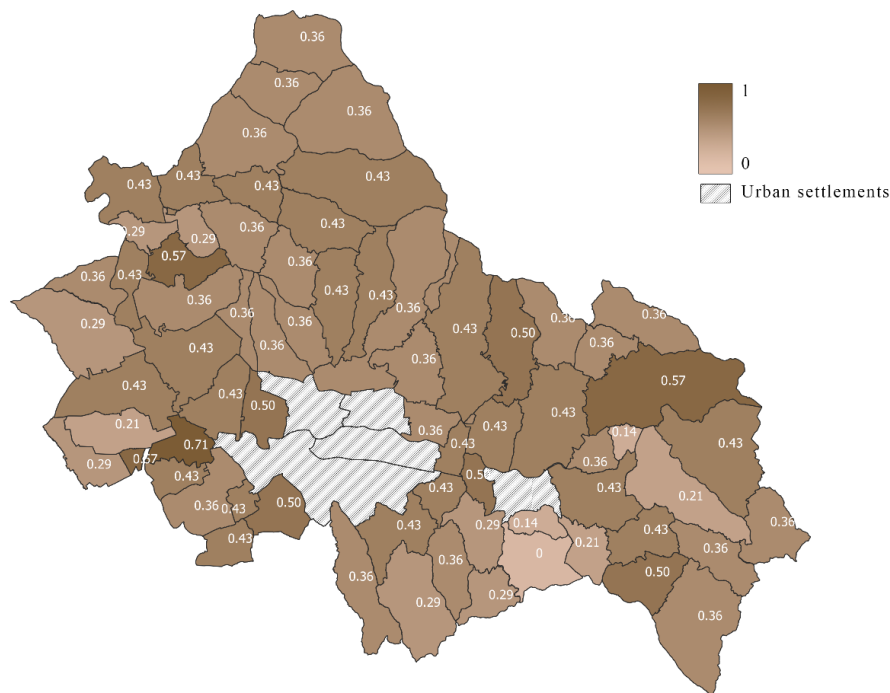


Fig. 2 Spatial distribution: Right to Work accessibility

The majority of communities, up to 60 (87%), had Right to Work accessibility indicator values below 0.5 and were classified into the following groups (Fig. 2):

- 1) Communities with an indicator value of 0-0.21 (8.69%);
- 2) Communities with an indicator value of 0.29 (10.1%);
- 3) Communities with an indicator value of 0.36 (34.78%); and
- 4) Communities with an indicator value of 0.43 (33.33%).

Only 9 localities (13.04%) had indicator values between 0.50-0.71.

When examining the specific indicators, it is crucial to note that virtually all (only one) municipalities have well-organized public transportation, and all vehicles are adapted and accessible to those with disabilities and the elderly. Only 12 communities have a post office, and only four of them are accessible for people with disabilities.

The signal of mobile operators is a necessary condition for exercising the right to work. Certain jobs are frequently applied for and advertised online. You can also use the Internet to offer items and services, attend skill-building courses, and so on.

In the observed villages, cell operator signals are completely absent in five, while this indication is ranked highest in only two.

The lack of kindergartens in numerous communities hinders moms with preschool-aged children from entering the labour market, resulting in low indicator scores. There are no preschool-aged children in six settlements, while the other five, with the exception of Koritnjak, have a population of women aged 20 to 65. Because there is no information on whether pregnant mothers exist in this population, the presence of kindergartens was considered in all localities during the needs assessment for safety.

Table 5 Achievement of resource indicators for Right to health

Achievement of resource indicators		Rationale
Healthcare institutions – outpatient facilities		
0	indicator not achieved	There is no outpatient facility in the community
1	indicator partially achieved	There is an outpatient facility in the community, but it does not have an ramp for pedestrian and wheelchair users
2	indicator fully achieved	There is an outpatient facility in the community with an ramp for pedestrian and wheelchair users
Pharmacies		
0	indicator not achieved	There is no pharmacy in the community
1	indicator partially achieved	There is a pharmacy in the community, but it does not have an ramp for pedestrian and wheelchair users
2	indicator fully achieved	There is a pharmacy in the community with an ramp for pedestrian and wheelchair users
Sports fields		
0	indicator not achieved	There is no sports field in the community
1	indicator partially achieved	There is a sports field in the community, but it is equipped for one sport only
2	indicator fully achieved	There is a sports field in the community equipped for several sports (basketball, handball and football, volleyball, etc.)

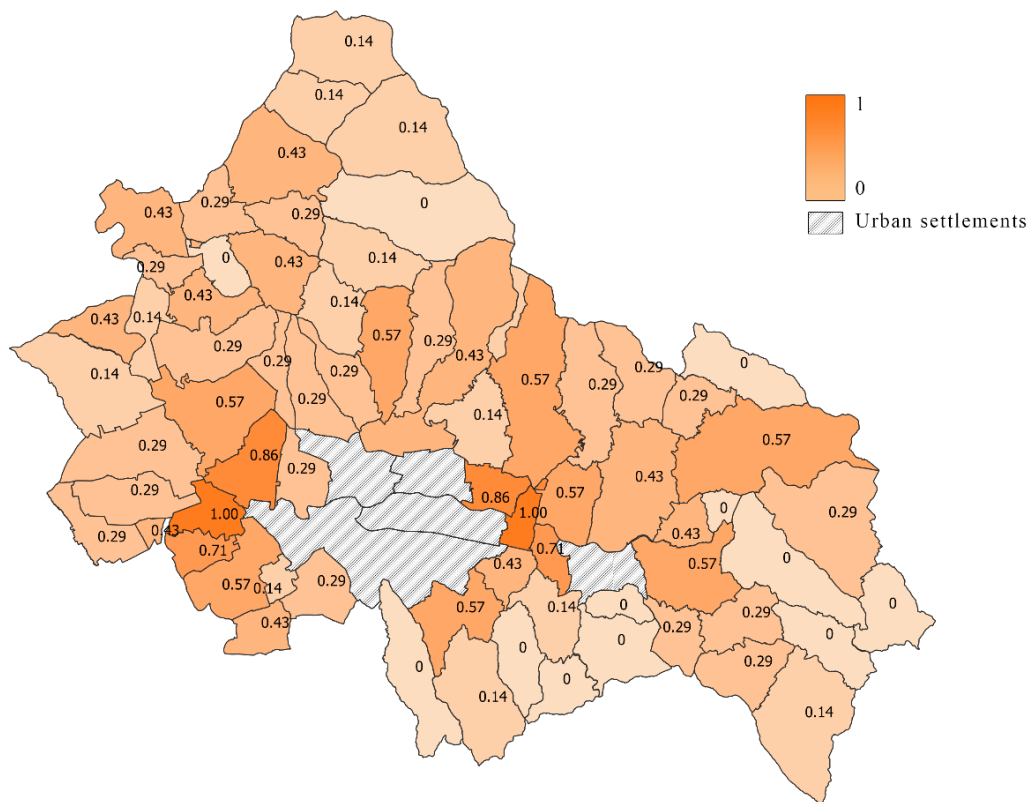


Fig. 3 Spatial distribution: Right to Health accessibility

In the analysis of the accessibility of the Right to Health, six types of communities were identified based on the indicator value (Fig. 3). Four categories, accounting for 79.7% of the observed communities, have indicator values less than 0.50. In the first group, 12 communities (17.39%) have indicator values of zero. In these communities, health institutions and pharmacies have not been identified as primary public resources that enable the realization of the Right to Health, nor have organized public outdoor sports facilities that provide spatial capacity for recreational and sporting activities in order to promote and maintain a healthy lifestyle. In the second group, which also includes 12 communities (17.39%), the indicator value is 0.14. In this category of localities, there is usually one sports field, resulting in a partial increase in the indicator value. Communities with indicator values of 0.29 (28.98%) and 0.43 (15.94%) have multiple sports fields and an outpatient clinic, respectively. The remaining groups of communities have an indicator value of 0.57 (11.59%), or 0.71-0.86 (5.7%). Brzi Brod and Deveti Maj communities stand out, with maximum indicator values of one. This group of communities is geograph-

ically closest to the urban areas of Pantelejš, Medijana, Paliulua, Crveni Krst, and Niška Banja.

Figure 4 also illustrates substantial disparities in physical resources among specific communities.



Fig. 4 Photos of physical resources in communities

Discussion

The research findings suggest that there are a number of reasons why it is relevant to think about alternative methods of measuring access to human rights. The approach given in this work, as well as the findings obtained from its application, demonstrate that while reporting on national normative regulation is important, it

cannot be the primary method of reporting on this topic. For example, the Republic of Serbia has signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, and many other treaties. The government also established the National Youth Strategy, the Strategy for Active and Healthy Aging, and the Strategy for Improving the Position of Persons with Disabilities, all of which are key frameworks for reducing discrimination and disparities. Furthermore, various indicators tracked by the UN ([UN, 2023](#)) demonstrate Serbia's progress toward achieving the Global Goals and improving human rights implementation. These statistics do not correspond to the recommendations that the Republic of Serbia received before the Human Rights Council, when 94 representatives of UN member states submitted 256 suggestions for the improvement of human rights. Some of the recommendations pertained to the betterment of the economic situation of women, the rights of children, and the rights of people with disabilities (Pokuševski & Petrović, 2024). Using the HRBA approach on a smaller form of local self-government than LGUs (Law on Local Self-Government, 2007), we attempted to show a more thorough picture than the one at the national or regional level, or to offer one of the perspectives in a different display of indicators and got recommendations. For example, the statement that indicators show that the right to work has improved for women at the Republic of Serbia level may be a good move for our country and a sign of improved conditions compared to the previous reporting period, but it is certainly not important for women who lack the basic infrastructure in their communities to make use of this right. When viewed from a smaller territorial entity, such as a city, the situation is not significantly different. The City of Niš falls under the first level of development for local self-governments (20 units above the national average) (Regulation on establishing the uniform list Regional developments and local units Of self-government for the year 2014). However, this research suggests that the picture may not be consistent across all local communities. As a result, regardless of level of development, some demographic groups may have limited or no access to essential rights such as the right to labour, health, and education. Despite the fact that physical resources for the fulfilment of certain rights may exist in a neighbouring community or an urban area of the city, access for certain marginalized groups may be difficult, so observing these prerequisites at the local community level appears to be essential.

All citizens of the Republic of Serbia have the right to work, which is guaranteed by law. However, the findings of this study indicate that, in terms of physical resources, exercising this right is not equally available to everyone. In the context of the observed physical resources, we can see that no community has the highest

value for the indicator. More particular, the local infrastructure that should provide access to this right is either non-existent or inadequately tailored to the target populations. The lack of physical resources, such as schools and kindergartens, has a substantial impact on access to the right to work.

These institutions may offer employment opportunities for people of the community, as well as serve as an essential requirement for moms of preschool and school-age children to enter the labour force. Thus, in numerous communities (Popovac, Gornji Matejevac, Kamenica), if the population is predominantly female, the indicator of accessibility to the right to work is 0.5 or below. Medoševac and Pasi Poljana have similar low indicators and a high proportion of individuals with disabilities. For people with disabilities, this entails the lack of adaptability or the full absence of physical resources that would allow them to exercise their right to work.

The right to health, like the right to work, when seen at the community level provides an improved understanding of its accessibility. More specifically, we can detect different challenges that we would not have noticed in a larger image. While some communities have strong access to this entitlement, the research shows that in the City of Niš, roughly 35% of the localities do not have a single health institution listed. Residents of the Deveti Maj and Brzi Brod communities have all of the physical resources required to realize their right to health. Because these towns are closest to urban areas settlements, physical resources such as public transit frequency are significantly more readily available than in other areas. Such physical resources allow all individuals, including particularly vulnerable groups, to provide primary health care in their community, and if necessary, they can use public transportation to access secondary-level health services. All of this is quite difficult for residents of communities such as Cerje and Ravni Dol. Specifically, because physical resources such as health facilities do not exist, their access to basic health care is limited. This is especially true for vulnerable populations including the elderly and those with disabilities. Kamenica, Gornji Matejevac, and Medoševac have a large elderly population with a health accessibility rating of roughly 0.5. The condition in these communities is comparable to the percentage of people with disabilities. If we consider that transport in cities is less accessible to these populations, this suggests even less physical resources as essential precondition for realizing one of the rights that are declared to be available to everyone. Returning to the normative arrangement, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities signing a specific norm that prescribes that States Parties shall take appropriate measures to ensure to persons with disabilities access, on an equal basis with others, to the physical environment, to transportation, to information and communications, including information and communications technologies and systems, and to other facilities and services open or provided to the public, both in urban and in rural areas (Reyes, 2019). All of this refers to a large disparity between legal guarantees

and real provision of health services at the local level, as demonstrated by various research (Broberg & Sano, 2017; Gabel, 2024).

Conclusions

This study emphasizes the essential function of resource-based assessment in determining the actual accessibility of human rights at the local level. The findings indicate that, despite established norms and clearly specified policies, the execution of implementation, or direct access to rights, may be absent or problematic. We have shown that access to fundamental rights, i.e. the right to employment and healthcare, varies based on the geographical and socioeconomic framework of communities.

The research findings reveal significant inequalities in the accessibility of public resources, disproportionately impacting children, women, those with impairments, and the elderly. Despite the legislative framework safeguarding these rights, the absence of essential infrastructure—such as kindergartens, schools, and healthcare facilities—constitutes a substantial impediment to their realization. Physical resources are limited in the Niš communities of Kamenica, Gornji Matejevac, and Medoševac, restricting access to employment and healthcare services. Perceiving human rights in this manner can substantially aid social work professionals in effectively identifying inequities and advocating for those unable to enjoy their rights. Social workers, in collaboration with disadvantaged groups, can significantly contribute to increasing awareness and encouraging policymakers to allocate essential resources for improved care and protection (Ife, 2012). Landman and Carvalho assert, “Measurement is not an end in itself, but a tool to assist individuals” (Landman & Carvalho, 2010:131).

This study warrants additional development as preliminary research. Future research should enhance and broaden the array of public resource indicators, assess the quality of services rendered, and incorporate supplementary aspects such as ICT accessibility and community-level statistics regarding postal or communication services. It is essential to engage citizens more directly in the assessment of access to rights via surveys and participatory processes, thereby empowering local populations to impact the formulation of human rights-based policies. Enhancing data collecting and creating tools like WebGIS portals or specialized field-survey software would improve the precision and applicability of outcomes. Ultimately, juxtaposing the human rights accessibility indicator with other indices may provide significant insights into the correlations between sectoral policies and the actualization of rights.

Acknowledgement

This work was supported by the Serbian Ministry of Science, Technological Development and Innovation through the Mathematical Institute of the Serbian Academy of Sciences and Arts.

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