

Children are our future

Čhavore hin amaro bacht

Contact: Martina Justová ; just@nexta.sk

In particular goals, project implementation, key aspects of the project, results, organisational aspects and financing should be addressed here. **The project description should be a maximum of 3 pages.**

Average roma community member has very low level of achieved education (close to illiteracy), which is the reason why high unemployment and crime is widespread among roma people.

We work out financial analysis focused how level of education influences crime rates. This analysis shows, that conviction ratio among university graduates is 7 for each 100 thousand. In comparison conviction ratio among people with basic education is 271 for each 100 thousands, which is 40 times more. People with lower secondary education have 144 for each 100 thousand conviction ratio compared with A-level graduates who have 29 for each 100 thousand conviction ratio.

Situation before project start:

Roma children, who are participants on our project, are visiting special primary school for children with low IQ. Our research shows, that these children are not retarded, but socially neglected with low motivation.

A lot of roma children do not understand Slovak language, because at home they speak only in their mother tongue. Their parents do not teach them basics of the language of the majority, which is the cause of continuous failure to cope with life outside roma community for these children. This problem is most visible in the school. Because of communication problems, roma child do not understand a teacher or his instructions during every day education process or at psychological ability testing by school psychologist.

Child cannot fulfil teachers expectations if it does not understand his instructions, because teacher does not realize that, he tries common way of giving bad marks or putting more pressure on child.

Child does not integrate with a classmates for many reasons:

1. Child does not understand common conversation, has very low social skills (fighting, shouting, restlessness)
2. Roma child usually does not keep acceptable hygiene (stinks)
3. Roma child does not spend his free time with his classmates at some sport or games due to his conformity to roma community rules.

Systematic negative feedback from teachers and classmates leads to apathy; child becomes outsider.

Roma parents instead of helping their children with education choose easy solution of placing children to special school deliberately. The key aspect is the overall approach of Roma

parents to education. They do not see any value in it, so there is no motivation to learn and visit a school for their children who are living primary school very early.

Often Roma children spend free time in the streets witnessing or participating on whole range of sociopathological phenomena. (drugs, crime, promiscuity).

Girls get pregnant early, even if they are not ready for mother role. They are still children themselves. This is where pathology circle of neglected roma children starts and ends.

Project implementation plan, form, methods and treatment

By doing this project we are breaking pathological circle of neglected children described above. We enter this circle as early in the life of the child as possible (preschool and early school age)

Searching activity: Our social centre is visited daily by Roma community. We provide them with clothing and food. They do not get it for free, but they have to participate on running the centre. For one hour of work they get food, clothes, shoes and other things for their families. Parents are coming with their children. We provide them a place where they can play games, do their homework, access computers and so on.

Project organization: We employ a Roma assistant, who under pedagogic supervision works daily with children visiting centre. In our centre “classroom” there are computers placed in such way allowing double sitting – two children working at each computer.

Also there are tables and toys available for writing homework or playing games. One children group stays in “classroom” for approximately 90 minutes. Seven to ten children works with computers and one or two are sitting at the table doing their homework. Children rotate so they are all ready for next school day.

Computers are used for playing with special educational programs (Children’s corner, Clown Thomas circus) based on age group – learning by playing.

In cooperation with software company we created special program designed for helping Roma children learn Slovak. This program is freely available at our web site www.majak.org , where the whole project *Children are our future* is presented. The program has graphical interactive games with recorded voice developing children’s vocabulary and communication repertory lowering social disintegration.

Education method selected, a principal of learning by playing has proved to be very efficient.

A game is natural way of learning. Child accepts this way of teaching without problems. Step by step, child develops his potential, acquires new skills and knowledge, widens up vocabulary, and gets opportunity to spend free time meaningfully. Speed rate of mastering new skills and knowledge is set individually at each child.

Individual work: We use these methods for individual work with children:

Diagnostics by drawing, dialogue, investigation of vocabulary, basic colours, shapes orientation, concentration exercises, psychohygienical exercises, picture drawing association, games with stories, directed acceptance dialogue, short physical exercises, relaxation, imagination exercises, verbal, non verbal creativity and so on. We also set up therapeutic room where social pedagogue or psychologist works with children individually if needed.

There are familiar relationships between Roma assistant and children. Children tells her what they cannot say to anyone else. For example if they get abused in school, in family, in community or about smoking or stealing metals and selling them and so on. Roma assistant also watches children behaviour for anomalies and report it to social pedagogues who work with children on individual basis or try to solve problem in its complexity. For example if child stops to attend regular school we contact school pedagogue to work out the reasons.

Or if there are indicia of CAN syndrome we find social curator, doctor or contact parents.

Group work: Suitable for teenagers. Our project also with older children. They come to centre mainly because of computers. However we do not have suitable teenage programs, so we created group meeting every week. Work in group is focused on building self recognition, self confidence and self regulation of child in the group. Group participants makes their own rules together with psychologist leading the group. In one group there is 7 children maximum.

We use these methods: social pressure elimination by playing role taking games, mind barrier breaking exercises, assertive behaviour exercises, will-power exercises, patience exercises, problem solving with authorities exercise, aggressive behaviour management exercises, work with own emotions and moods,

Exercises designed to show reasons of social rules and control mechanisms in society, exercises focused on defence of own and group interests and finding compromise solutions, creation of pressure recognition mechanism and psychohygiene.

Motivation is playing games and work on computers.

Outputs:

1. Project works as prevention of sociopathological phenomena (crime, drug abuse, promiscuity)
2. Project motivates - increasing interest in education among Roma community members.
3. Neglected Roma children learn how to speak and understand Slovak text and conversation.
4. Bettering up school attendance.
5. Bettering up school results and behaviour (confirmed by school teachers)
6. Supporting positive change in classroom community acceptance.

7. Special software program for helping Roma children understand Slovak. Freely available on www.majak.org
8. Brochure describing problems solved by our project, guide how to use the program with suggestion of complementary methods.
9. Availability for all organizations working with Roma people.

PC program description:

Pc program has been builded to be intuitive simply manageable and understandable. By playing language games children can learn and develop vocabulary, which helps them at further language extension in normal life.

Program instructions are accompanied by recorded voice so even small children without reading skills can use it.

A pictures are colourful and interesting. Besides learning language children also sharpen up their memory, concentration, object recognition, for example cutlery or hygiene needs (learning how to dine, or keep personal hygiene) orientation –left, right, up and down, coordination eye – hand.

We also conducted brief research among school teachers. Our goal was to find out how our project influenced our clients outside social centre. About 73% percent of teachers confirmed better school attendance, 42% agreed that children behaviour has changed positively against 25% who did not agree.

<i>Project realization:</i>	<i>Maják, civic association, Bernolákova 37, 953 01 Zlaté Moravce</i>
<i>Realization schedule:</i>	<i>from April 2006 – continue</i>
<i>Professional supervision:</i>	<i>PhDr. Martina Justová, Director o. z. Maják</i>
<i>Project manager:</i>	<i>Mgr. Gabriela Rakovská, social pedagogist</i>
<i>Roma assistant:</i>	<i>Šárka Hunková</i>
<i>PC program voice:</i>	<i>PhDr. Martin Jurčo, Slovak Broadcasting service</i>
<i>Program financing:</i>	
	- Ministry of transportation, mailing services and telecommunications (350 thousand Sk)
	- Office of SR government commissioner for Roma communities(150 thousand Sk)
	“Classroom” furniture and computers – our own contribution