

„BUILDING CAPACITIES FOR EFFECTIVE EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT OF MARGINALIZED ROMA CHILDREN” PROGRAM

BEST PRACTICES OF 2019/2020



Foreword

Since its inception, the Carpathian Foundation has been paying special attention to the development of disadvantaged, marginalized and (Roma) communities and their social integration. From the outset, we run programs to provide financial and professional support to Roma and pro-Roma civil society organizations (CSOs) for implementing their local development initiatives. Through numerous training courses, meetings and study tours, we strive to foster the capacity building of these non-government actors to allow them to carry out their work as efficiently as possible.

The purpose of this publication is to present and share good practices, projects supported by us in the field of Early Childhood Development (ECD) in marginalized Roma communities in the north-east of Hungary and the implementing civil society organizations. Carpathian Foundation has been cooperating with the majority of NGOs presented in this publication for several years or in some cases for decades, we recognize the value of their work and strive to support their activities with any and all resources available to us.

The main purpose of the program presented here is, among many other things, to help expand the professional arsenal of involved organizations in the field of early childhood development further, so that they can start development work with families, communities living in poverty in the earliest year possible.



This publication summarizes the second season of our Early Childhood Development Program, which unfortunately coincided with the outbreak and first wave of the new coronavirus pandemic. The pandemic particularly affects excluded communities living in poverty and makes the work of NGOs working for and in collaboration with them, significantly more difficult, which we partly present in this publication as well.

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Early Childhood Development

– a tool for reducing social disadvantages

The period from birth to the age of eight (years) is crucial for the completeness and healthy nature of the children's mental, emotional and spiritual development. Strong cognitive and social skills are essential for success in adulthood. It has been long known, and proven, that experiences, stimuli and learning in the early years of life, – this is especially true for disadvantaged children – are of paramount importance to the child's development and almost irreplaceable in later life. Therefore, the circumstances in which a child grows up, all the experiences and stimuli that enrich him or her are extremely important in these early years of life, since it determines a child's future life chances and social mobility opportunities. Children living in families in poverty or deep poverty, who, due to deprivation and poor conditions, do not acquire strong abilities and skills in their early childhood, are more likely to find themselves trapped in lower levels of education, precarious employment, and reproduced poverty for a lifetime than their better-off contemporaries.

Interventions in the early years of life are most effective. This is the time when disadvantages, which are not caused by disability or health problems, but by bad conditions, unfavorable life situations, poverty and deprivation, can be best reduced. Éva Szomor and Noémi László (2014), referring to American studies, emphasize that in a stimulus-poor environment the brain of young children is lagging behind in development. According to Mária Gallai (2009): 'Based on the findings of neurological research, it is proven that not only genetic effects, but environmental enrichment and the rich emotional relationship between a parent and a child, are also crucial to brain development. All of these have an effect to the processes in the brain and through them to the intellectual development.'

The quality of children's home environment is naturally closely linked to the socio-economic background, the income situation of the family, housing conditions,



parents' education and labor market position. All of these basically determine the home care environment that is related to the development of children and the quality of their development.

Special educational needs teacher Éva Szomor, expert on the topic, says that early childhood development as external help is most needed where children and families live in poverty and deprivation, where conditions and circumstances – housing, food, clothing, healthy environment – are missing to ensure the proper development of skills and competences. All of these, however, are almost certainly available to middle-class families.

Family roles and patterns that parents can draw upon when raising their children are insufficient in families living in extreme poverty due to generational poverty and lack of cultural capital.

Early childhood development aims to compensate for the lags and deficiencies caused by disadvantaged background, poverty and low parental educational levels by creating the ideal conditions and circumstances necessary to allow children and parents to develop, and to perform the best of their abilities and skills, with complex approach and services for the children and their family.

Programs that flag early childhood development should not only target children, but also their families, as in many cases a family – as a whole – needs to make up for missed opportunities in childhood, to overcome disadvantages. It is also extremely important to improve the availability and quality of education, social and healthcare professionals, institutions and services related to children and families in this field.

It is also essential to encourage cooperation between the affected parties (children, families, professionals), which requires partnership, proper communication and, in many cases, understanding and acceptance of each other.



The description of the program

The primary target group for early childhood are children aged 0-5, of which 17.5 percent are estimated to live below the poverty threshold in Hungary. One fifth (19.7 percent) of 0-5-year-olds live in severe financial deprivation⁽¹⁾, ie. under conditions that are insufficient for proper development and development of abilities.

The European Union average is less than half (7.2 percent) of this. In Hungary, nearly one-third (31 percent) of the age group live in poverty or exclusion (the latter is an indicator not only of income and deprivation but also of parents' unfavorable labor market situation).⁽²⁾ This represents 182,000 of the total child population of Hungary.

Our program is implemented in the marginalized area of North-Eastern Hungary, where we provide approximately HUF 4 million (of cca. 12,000 EUR) non-refundable grants per project for 12-13 local civil society organizations working for the Roma communities in severe poverty each year in order to provide complex services, to carry out programs in early childhood development and to improve and expand their competences and professional toolkits in the field of ECD.

The supported organizations implement their programs in 18 municipalities in Heves, Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén, Hajdú-Bihar, Nógrád and Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg counties.

The primary target group of the program is 0-8-year-old Roma children with disadvantaged backgrounds, (especially in the 0-5 age range). In a broader sense, children, their families and the whole community are the beneficiaries of the program. Our annual program contributes to early childhood development for nearly 400-500 children under the age of 8, living in difficult conditions, in disadvantaged settlements or areas. Within the framework of 13 granted projects, regular skill development programs, excursions and camps are organized for children which are unavailable or hardly available for them in these rural areas.

Parent and family involvement is also an important part of the program: parents' clubs have been established in many settlements. In addition to this, programs help parents gain access to information and services about childcare and education.

In the 2019/2020 season of the program, life created a difficult situation for organizations: due to the emergency restrictions introduced as a result of the pandemic, group sessions and face-to-face meetings had to be interrupted. Additionally, the organizations and also the families faced a new and so far unknown challenge: institutions closed their doors, unemployment rose and school children had to cope with digital homeschooling.



It was necessary for the organizations to react and adapt immediately so that despite the unfavorable situation they could maintain the relationship of trust with their families, prevent their complete isolation, and reduce their fears arising from the information deficit. The Carpathian Foundation and the supported CSOs organized fundraisings to provide the necessary equipment for the families.

Before and after the nearly 3-month restriction, serious efforts have been made by the program implementers to break discriminatory and exclusionist stereotypes about Roma people.

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1 The indicator is the part of the indicator system of the EU2020 Strategy. Severely materially deprived persons have living conditions severely constrained by a lack of resources, they cannot afford at least 4 out of 9 deprivations items: 1) to pay rent or utility bills, 2) keep home adequately warm, 3) face unexpected expenses, 4) eat meat, fish or a protein equivalent every second day, 5) a week holiday away from home, 6) a car, 7) a washing machine, 8) a color TV, 9) a telephone. <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database> The indicator is part of the indicator system of the EU2020 Strategy

2 Percentage of persons in the general population who are affected by one or more of the relative income poverty, severe material deprivation or very low work intensity. <http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/data/database>

GIVE ME YOUR HAND! ASSOCIATION FOR THE PROMOTION OF EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IN EDUCATION AND THE LABOR MARKET

Game for everyone

The Association was established in 2008 with the aim of helping to create equal opportunities in both education and the labor market. Cooperation and common thinking are decisive in the operation of the association. This is supported by the fact that the organization has been involved in the processes promoting domestic and international social integration for a long time. Their principle is to use their projects to reach their target groups with such programs that meet the needs and help the socially disadvantaged people with catch up. It is important that the people they work with are not only participants but also active shapers of their programs.



for parents, focusing on the development of life management skills, key competencies and identity consciousness. At Knowledge Days, they discussed topics chosen by parents with a pediatrician and a development trainer who helped moms solve any problems they encountered. A group of volunteer parents was also formed, so former participants in the program helped young parents newly joining the program by transferring knowledge and experience. The association works closely with the public institutions and services operating in the field of early childhood, and a network of supporters has been established with the participation of several institutions.



The project, supported by the Carpathian Foundation, was implemented with the participation of families caring small and primary school children living in the Huszár settlement in Nyíregyháza. At the start of the program, the situation and needs of the joined families were assessed, based on what the individual development plans were built and group development activities were carried out. The Playtime program element aimed at developing parental competencies, with the aim of giving parents the prominent role of play in parenting and raising awareness of the importance of joint play. A Toy Library is operated, through which children could rent various tools, books, and developmental toys (e.g. puzzle and color puzzles, building blocks, memory cards, puzzles, plasticine, beading, ball tracks, coloring, printing toys, etc.). Two alternative community events were also organized

“The nationwide restrictions imposed on March 16 2020 have also changed the professional work of our organization. Our goals have not changed, but our methods, including communication, have been adapted to the situation. In the second half of the project, we placed more emphasis on individual and family development [...]” (Final report, Give me your hand Association)



THE ROMA SELF-HELP ASSOCIATION OF CSEREHÁT

KidSmile

After several years of informal operation, the Association was founded in 2007, with the long-term goal of establishing a „Roma resource center” in Cserehát, which brings resources, job opportunities and trainings to the region as a regional management office. Through their wide range of activities, they seek to make life easier for local people (e.g.: helping with day-to-day administration, transporting children and young people to school from places where there is no local school, or helping families to shop in a nearby big city, etc.). Their community building and strengthening programs such as film screenings, sports and leisure events, cultural programs are aimed at young people and the general population, but they also organize trips to the nearby forest for children. The organization has been involved in the development and operation of a local school program, as well as in organizing family planning and childcare education briefings.

Their project, supported by the Carpathian Foundation, aimed to strengthen the parental competencies of families living in Tomor, Lak and Homrogd. According to their experience local young people are not properly prepared for parental roles, so they have set up a



professional counseling circle, to which young parents can turn with confidence with their questions and problems, and through which they provide mothers with individual professional support and parenting counseling. The face-to-face meetings were complemented by online counseling: a Facebook group was created where moms can ask boldly about their problems, be it parenting or administration. At the gastro clubs,

„...the crisis situation caused by the coronavirus further strengthened us in our idea that we should primarily pass on abilities to parents, support the development and expansion of their skills, which in the future they will be able to use individually in everyday life.” (Final report, The Roma Self-Help Association of Cserehát)



parents learned new cooking, housekeeping and education, as well as relationship conflict management techniques. Community programs have sought to create a supportive environment, thus expanding mothers' social relationships and encouraging them to come together. Their further goal is to strengthen the community cooperation between the parents so much that they themselves become the initiators and organizers of programs and events. By the end of the project, the parents had already organized two community programs.

To ensure proper early childhood development, physiotherapists and mental health professionals cared for the children and provided advice to the parents over the weekend.



THE ASSOCIATION OF VILLAGE DEVELOPERS IN BÜKKSZENTMÁRTON

Children's Island 2

The Association was founded in January 2013 in Bükksgentmárton, which has a population of barely 300, with the aim of developing local human resources, strengthening the cohesion of the village and relations between Roma and non-Roma, and reducing Roma unemployment. They participate in the establishment and development of cooperation between the surrounding villages. They hold regular civil roundtables to discuss the problems of the village and initiate future planning with local public actors, e.g. with the mayor and the Roma self-government. The members of the association organize several community programs, for the organization and implementation of which they acquired the necessary knowledge and practice within the framework of a TÁMOP project, with professional support, and started development work in connection with it, which they try to continue and expand. The room for community and children's activities, Children's Island, was designed in a building offered by the local government.



There are no public institutions in the village, so children go to kindergartens and schools in other settlements. Thus, there is no personal relationship between parents and educators, therefore, and due to the parents' low level of education, children are lagging behind their peers. The aim of the project is to prepare them for school by intervening in the lives of families and young children in Bükksgentmárton, and to lay the foundations for successful school performance and the acquisition of marketable knowledge and skills in later life. For small children under the age of 8 living in the



„From March 15 to April 13, the community house was closed, after which the local helper opened the Children's Island every afternoon and the class was held in groups of 2-3 people according to hygiene standards. [...]. It was mainly the preschool children and their mothers who used this service, as they were already very worn out by the confinement at home and so they had a place to move...” (Final report, The Association of Village Builders in Bükksgentmárton)



settlement (32 people), regular individual and group development sessions were held in three age groups, in which the parents were also active participants. The sessions were weekly led by a social educator, and the local project manager waited for the children with toys and learning aids on Children's Island every weekday. Children aged 6-8 also took part in a one-week camp in the summer, with the main aim of developing exercise and other skills. The monthly Family Days provided an opportunity to exchange information, play together and strengthen the community. The programs of the playhouse were enriched by trips to nature.

REAL PEARL FOUNDATION

Three in One program series: Second Act

The Real Pearl Foundation began its work in 1999 as an art school. Recognizing that in order to achieve change, it is not only necessary to help children in the classroom, but also to reach them and their parents in their living environment, the Foundation has expanded its scope of activities with opportunity-creating field work.

Their complex work has three pillars:

1. Education, which includes the art school, the Toldi Tanoda, their scholarship program, school supplies grants, the baby-mommy club, and adult education.

2. The family care and community development pillar includes crisis management, job creation, community development programs and the development of self-sufficiency skills.

3. The Social Round Table operates as part of the pillar generating and mediating cooperation between institutions, where problems and case discussions take place with the involvement of the Roma community. The main location of this model development takes place in Told, a dead-end village of about 300 people, but its various elements are already used in 16 settlements.

The foundation seeks to develop adaptable models and methodologies.

The aim of the Foundation's present project was primarily to detect, diagnose and develop problems



related to speech production, as well as to map other gaps and strengths and to implement individualized developments based on them. Children enrolled in the school preparation program attended a personalized development session once a week in average. Pre-school, 1st and 2nd grade children enrolled in the previous school year were not let go either, they were monitored on individual and pair learning opportunities. Pre-school children were screened with speech therapy surveys and then 16 children were selected for monthly individual development. They want to find a comprehensive, long-term solution to the shortage of specialists in the segregated areas, so they started to develop a methodology within the framework of

„The greatest lessons have been learned from the epidemic situation, so we have the most important experiences with online education. We want to prepare for a later wave in this regard, so we plan to better prepare parents, create a more ideal learning environment, and provide more tangible tools.” (Final report, The Real Pearl Foundation)



a pilot program, which can support speech therapy development online to a certain extent. As part of the program element, 22 large group preschoolers participated in the daycare camp during the summer months. Although the sessions and club events took place at the Tanoda of Told, the pilot program also involved students from four other settlements (Alsószentmárton, Hernádszentandrás, Csörög and Dány).

In addition, a baby-mommy club was held on a weekly basis for young moms to gain practical knowledge on parenting and life management issues, as well as ideas for home-based skill development activities. At the time of the restrictions imposed as a result of the virus, the sessions were held online, individually.



THE ASSOCIATION FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPERS AND LOCAL SOCIAL RESEARCHERS

Animator Network for Roma Youth 2

The work of the Association dates back almost two decades: they helped to form a number of organizations, and after the renewal of representatives in 2011, young Roma intellectuals were also involved in the organization. Their members include a social worker, a social pedagogue, an educator, an IT specialist, a Roma community developer, an economist and an architect. Their professional partners are local NGOs, urban and county public cultural, cultural and child protection institutions.

The aim and mission of the Association is the professional support and protection of the interests of local small communities, groups of children, youth and adults. Their members work with disadvantaged groups, mainly Roma and people living in poverty, in numerous small settlements in Heves county. Communication trainings have already been held for several youth groups, with the main emphasis on the assertiveness of young Roma people in order to preserve their human dignity in various dialogues, situations of power, especially at school. In 2015-16, with the support of the EEA/Norway Civil Fund, the Roma Youth Animator Network was established, the members of which, young Roma people from Heves county, were endowed with community organizing skills.

Their project supporting early capability care was implemented in small county settlements where many public services and institutions are not available. In order to fill the shortage of professionals, their aim is to prepare active young Roma people living in the affected settlements, especially in Egerbakta, to participate in



the skills development of Roma children. The most motivated young people took part in a seven-occasion-training, gained theoretical and practical knowledge on the topic, and between the training sessions they were tested in practice, ie. they held children's workshops in their settlements, which were assessed together with the program experts.

In addition, classes were held on a weekly basis in Egerbakta, divided into two age groups: at the age group of children 3-5 the sessions focused on movement development (several times with the participation of parents), while developing learning abilities were in the focus at sessions of children between 6-8.

At the time of the emergency restrictions caused by the coronavirus, they tried to support the transition of primary school children to digital education, primarily by sharing digital teaching materials and practices available on the Internet.



LASKÓ-SPRING ASSOCIATION

Let's play and learn together 2

The Laskó-spring Association was established in 2013 in Hevesaranyos, on the northern border of Heves County, with the primary goal of creating a strong and active local community. The association wants to become an organization that can have a say in local decision making and issues that affect the inhabitants of Hevesaranyos, including the poor and Roma people. With their fundamental activities, they intend to promote the improvement of the quality of life of the local Roma and non-Roma population, they try to compensate for the lack of public, family and social services. They get help to implement their ideas from some of the local intelligentsia, as well as from the experts of the SZETA Eger Foundation. Thanks to several projects behind, the members of the association have learned to organize community programs, civil round tables, and have mastered the project approach, the need to prepare, and the way to resolve conflicts. They pay a particular attention to building the local community: the association is proud of its Roma dance group of local young people, which greatly contributes to strengthening the cohesion of the local Roma community.

The aim of their local early childhood development program is to fill the gaps or compensate difficulties that are caused by lacking services for children, and to strengthen parental competencies and skills. In the project individual and group sessions were organized for nearly 40 children under the age of 8 reaching two age groups: children under the age of 3 (and their parents) and pre-school or elementary school children between the age of 4 and 8. The aim of the activities was to develop movement and cognitive skills that interact with attention, perception, speech, thinking, creativity, and to fill in the missing skills and knowledge. During the emergency restrictions, individual developments came to the fore, primarily the activities supporting the development of fine movements like cutting, coloring, sorting, eye and hand coordination exercises. Once a month on family days, children and adults could play together, chat and pass information to each other. This contributed to the development and strengthening of the communities of children, young people and adults.



„Unfortunately, the introduction of official restrictions due to the coronavirus epidemic also affected the opening hours of the community house. Due to this we did not organize the planned classes and the family programs were also cancelled. Although many children could not go to school due to the school closures ordered by the government, nor they could come to the community house to study or play. I visited the families daily, took tasks for the children, pencils, colored pencils, because one day to the next these families had to set up to study at home. I gave them recommendations on how to create a homeschooling agenda due to school closures, and provided learning assistance to anyone who requested it.” (Final report, Laskó-Spring Association)



THE ASSOCIATION OF ROMA MINORITY REPRESENTATIVES AND SPEAKERS OF NÓGRÁD COUNTY

Teensy-Weensy People 2

The non-profit organization was founded in 1996, and located in Bátonyterenye, Nógrád county. Its diverse activities aim to reduce poverty. The main objective of the organization is to help out-of-school educational and leisure time activities for socially disadvantaged children and young people. The association currently runs classroom-type learning program in one settlement - but they used to do it in three other settlements, too. Children who attended them are also addressed with different programs. The association's pedagogical method is based on individual personality development, differentiation opportunities in learning, the project method, and the technique of cooperative learning. The parents and siblings of children are also happy to take part in the family programs and events organized. The organization collaborates with two grammar schools in Budapest, students form learning pairs, and they help each other mainly in English and Mathematics subjects. Additionally, once a week, children can take part in music lessons and in making photos and films.

In the Rocking sessions, moms learned easy-to-sing songs, rhymes, and movement games to support the development of their children under the age of three. External professionals joined these activities several times: a nurse, an early development specialist, a kindergarten teacher, and even a pastor in Lucfalva. For mothers and mom-to-bes, Mom&Baby Club occasions were organized, where mothers received practical advices from each other and invited professionals while their children experienced free play. As a result of the program element, the network of parents was also strengthened.



The aim of their early childhood program in Mátraverebély, Lucfalva and Bátonyterenye was to help children of local, disadvantaged families to develop physically, mentally and socially, thus ensuring an equal chance to start their schooling. The families with children weekly took part in the Fairytale Circle and the related interactive fairytale performances in which children were the actors and they played the tale. The performances provided an opportunity and space for children to learn about new roles and experience. Local kindergarten pedagogues also joined the fairytale theater sessions, so they managed to establish good relationship with children, and through the sessions they received professional support in their work with disadvantaged children.

OPÁL TALENT MANAGEMENT FOUNDATION

Learning by teaching

The aim of the Foundation that has been operating for a decade, is to help and motivate the learning progress of disadvantaged talented -mainly Roma- young people, and at the same time to reduce segregation. Its activities are diverse: it offers several opportunities for youngsters who outstand in sports, music, fine arts, humanities and natural science subjects to care their talents. There are many pedagogues among its volunteers who regularly develop the methodology of the organization. Two of their programs outstand of the others: there are a correspondence competition in 3 subjects every year and the talent developmental summer camp. In addition, the members and volunteers of the organisation emphasize environmental protection and transmit the knowledge they have accumulated, as well as expanding it together with the children. The long-term goal of the organization is to create its own educational institution, an "eco-school", which integrates alternative pedagogical methods into Hungarian public education and uses renewable energy sources.



successfully in the education system. During the digital work schedule children were given different tasks that were accomplished with the help of their parents, and they presented the results online. Families and children lack basic computer user skills, so members of the organization made 'Get smarter at home!' videos for them to facilitate their learning at home.



„The COVID-19 pandemic has caused serious difficulties. Both children and parents had a hard time adapting to the new situation, so it was hard to reach them, to work with them, but once they got used to the changed circumstances, we managed to work together more effectively.” (Final report, OPÁL Talent management Foundation)

The main objective of this program is to develop the skills of pre-school and primary school children aged between 3 and 8 living in Kompolt and Kápolna and to prevent their early school leaving. The biweekly activities for children focused on developing motor skills and emotional intelligence. Mental health development was organized for the children's older siblings monthly. Children in the program were involved in self- and peer-learning games, drama pedagogical exercises, storytelling, drawing, conflict management and crafting, as well as took part in an environmental trip.

As a result of the project, children's self-knowledge, identity and social skills developed, which enables them to integrate and make their ways more easily and



THE SZETA EGER FOUNDATION - FUND FOR SUPPORTING THE POOR

Let's go together! The 6th Pupil Network in Felnémet

Since its establishment in 1989 SZETA Eger Foundation - Fund for Supporting the Poor facilitates social integration and mobility of people -especially the Roma- living in poverty, through various means. Their services tend to extend the social and cultural capital of those who have low school attainment, information deficit, and experience social exclusion.

The colleagues and volunteers of the foundation are in daily contact with families living in settlement conditions, as a result of which the families joined and are currently actively participating in the work of the Foundation. With the acquired experience, they started development activities in several surrounding settlements, and since 2013 they organize the 'Settlement Network in Northern Hungary'. The members of the network are NGOs, established mostly by Roma people, with the aim of reducing social exclusion of the local Roma community, especially children and young people. The foundation continuously helps and strengthens the work of these associations (with fundraising, human resource development, knowledge transfer).

The association has always tried to reduce the social shortcoming of the Roma, with focus on children and youngsters. They support the vocational education for those who have a low level of education; they keep tutoring and support disadvantaged people to complete their primary school studies and to become qualified professionals.

Their early childhood development program addresses the families living in Béke-settlement in Felnémet. The objective is that children between the ages of 2 and 8 - as a result of developmental activities -, meet the requirements of kindergarten and school. The program includes individual and group development activities for children four days a week. Within the complex skill care (movement and cognitive skills) of children



in kindergarten they aim to prevent difficulties and to establish the development opportunities for the coming age.

In the spring of 2020, under the lockdown due to the pandemic, they paid special attention to children in order to prevent dropouts and lags in their school performance compared to their peers. The focus of the 6-day-long summer camp was on the movement development of children between the age of 6 and 8. The family days were organized monthly to strengthen the local community while providing opportunities for playing together, get-together, expanding informal relationships and exchanging information. The parents actively participated in the program as volunteers.

„As a result of the actions of the coronavirus pandemic, both children and adults have become isolated from the outside world, especially from educational institutions, which is the only integrative link for many of them. Therefore, our role and activity became more valuable, more and more families requested our services” (Final report, SZETA Eger Foundation)



THE SZOMOLYA HUNGARIAN ROMA ASSOCIATION

I'm rocking you, my daughter 2

In 2005 the Association was initiated by the local Roma community aiming to improve the local Roma people's quality of life and social mobility chances, to represent their interests and to be a mediator between the local decision-makers and non-Roma inhabitants. In 2008 the association bought a property in the village which they use as an office and a community house. Their fundamental activities include help in official and social administration and advocacy. In their community house they provide free internet and PC usage, as well as they regularly organize leisure time activities. They implemented settlement elimination programs between 2009 and 2010 in Szomolya, then between 2010 and 2011 in Sály, which supported the relocation of families living in cave dwellings (cellar houses) to an integrated living environment. During the programs, the infrastructural background of the association as well as its professional know-how have significantly improved, also its professional and personal network has expanded. It has 15-30 local volunteers. With the help of the Swiss-Hungarian Scholarship Fund, they implemented a two-year scholarship program with the aim to keep marginalized children in school.

Youth who drop out of secondary school give birth to their first children at a young age in the village, so the association aims to provide programs and activities for young parents (aged 17 to 28) that expand their general and parenting knowledge, develop their parenting skills and competencies, and as a consequence of the gained knowledge they raise their children more consciously. In the frames of the information days, external experts helped to present the importance of early childhood playful learning and games, as well as movement development practices. They also aim to create a helpful support community of young moms, so they organized Parent Club events every two weeks, which was replaced by online contact during the corona virus.



They offered activities to children under the age of 10 in three age groups: they organized Rocking activities provided primarily for infants and their parents, focusing on movement development; at the Story telling afternoon, the tales were elaborated with different methods, and the 5-10 years old children took part in playhouse activities.

During the restrictions introduced as a result of the pandemic, the children got creative, developmental tasks to be solved and prepared at home together with their parents, which strengthened the families, the parent-child relationship and also the trust in the association.



„One of the big problems of our association is that now, during the pandemic, we are not able to function as usual, as we are not allowed to keep our community house open, where we regularly organize our daily programs. Keeping in touch online is extremely difficult because some families do not have IT equipment or even if they may have a smartphone at home, they might not have internet access.” (Final report, Szomolya Hungarian Roma Association)



THE PEARL OF TARNA ASSOCIATION

Playful learning!

The Pearl of Tarna Association was established in 2013 to represent the local Roma community in Ó-Szajla. The main objective of the association is to promote the improvement of social and employment situation of people in Ó-Szajla and to contribute to the development of the settlement. Its fundamental activities include advocacy and community organization; to this end, they organize community programs and events such as the Day of Szajla, Children's Day, Sports Day, 1st of May, and regular, local consultations. The association is a member of the Heves33 Rural Development LEADER Action Group and cooperates with the local municipality and the Roma self-government. Through the implementation of their supported project titled "Community Development in Ó-Szajla" funded by the EEA/Norway Civil Fund the organization has professionally strengthened.

Recently, the members and volunteers of the association have invested a lot of energy in arranging several programs: they hold regular meetings, participate and also organize civil workshops in the settlement. The public membership meetings are the platform for their



small children about parenting, and supported them by transferring methodologies, knowledge and developing their skills. With the contribution of a pedagogue the group focused especially on small and fine-motor movements, the development of a sense of rhythm, and visual expression. Participating parents learned about the main stages of children's improvement and had the opportunity to discuss the perceived problems with a professional.

At the time of the first wave of the coronavirus pandemic, in person consultations with children and the pedagogue could not be realized, so the local program manager worked with the kindergarten pedagogue to create and deliver tasks to the children. In the Let's play together! group children's movement development was led by parents based on what they have learned and with the help of questionnaires they documented their children's development. Parents crafted together with their children on the occasions of the Creative Group, that strengthened their relationship and improve their visual skills. Family days provided the opportunity for the whole family to chat as well as to spend quality time together. Although, due to the corona virus, family days could not be held during the restrictions, but online game was organized for the children.



decision-making process, where they also discuss the various activities and tasks of the association. They can count on their members and volunteers both in organizing the programs and in brainstorming. They receive professional support from the Settlement Network in Northern Hungary.

Szajla, especially Ószajla, is a disadvantaged settlement, the two parts of the settlement are also physically separated from each other: there is a distance of almost 3-5 km between them. Public transport hits the village quite rarely, and basic public institutions and service providers (post office, shop, etc.) are missing from the settlement. Therefore, it was necessary to provide family support and assistance in official administration to the families who approached them weekly in order to operate their early childhood development program smoothly. In the children-parents group, they gave advice to women raising

„Our current biggest problem is that we can't meet in person, hold community sessions. It is also a significant problem that parents have to stay at home, some of them can't go to work, some of them have already lost their jobs; children also have trouble continuously staying at home. Our association tries to help every child who needs with learning.” (Final report, The Pearl of Tarna Association)

VAZDUNE CHERHAJA - RISING STARS ROMA WOMEN ASSOCIATION

Jasmine Toy Library of Nagyecsed 2

The aim of the organization is to promote the integration of disadvantaged social groups through social, cultural, educational activities, education for a healthy lifestyle, entertainment, talent management, organizing and implementing nature- and environmental protecting, children and youth programs and employment promotion programs. The main objective of the Association is to preserve the tradition and culture of the Roma people and to support the preservation of traditions. Their members and volunteers have participated in numerous Roma support programs and international projects. With the support of their projects and volunteers, they are currently working in Nagyecsed - one of the most peripheral cities in the Northern Great Plain region-, as well as in Hodász, Kántorjánosi and Nyírcsaholy.

The Association implemented the Jázmin playhouse program in Nagyecsed. The aim of the program was to support the development of cognitive, motor, mother tongue, communicational and social skills and competencies of small children. The Toy Library has become a community space that provides children of disadvantaged parents the opportunity to play with high-quality toys, puzzles and developmental tools on weekdays. Families have the opportunity to rent the toys and take them home, thus contributing to the joint play that develops the relationship between children and parents.

The program offered activities for the children in two age groups: the weekly sessions for children under the age of 3 were led by a local nurse, focusing mainly on physical activity, the development of cognitive functions and self-care habits. In the complex, playful activities for 4 to 6 years old children, beside movement activity, the focus was on the development of perceptual, verbal



„The lesson learned is that if we are constantly present and try to develop different skills and abilities with the right tools, games, fairy tales, it will bring results. Unfortunately, the virus intervened and so at that time we could work with families only online. We provided cleaning and food packages for the families during the virus situation.” (Final report, „Vazdune Cherhaja” Association)

and thinking skills. The children's improvement was followed up by a kindergarten pedagogue. Fairy Tale activities were held for mothers ten times, where they read tales together, elaborated them with the help of a social educator, and discussed parenting issues along the stories. In the 'Parents in Kindergarten' program element, the parents themselves planned and led children's activities, in which their individual competencies developed and they were also strengthened in their parental role.



21ST CENTURY ROMA WOMEN NATIONAL ASSOCIATION

SZIROM Playhouse- „We play to learn”

The establishment of the Association in 2016 is the result of the initiative of ten active Roma and non-Roma women. Their main goal is to promote the representation of the rights and social interests of (Roma and non-Roma) women by supporting their participation in public life and improving the quality of life of their families. They also aim to reduce prejudices against the Roma, to support the domestic and European integration of the Roma minority, and to find solutions to the social, employment, entrepreneurship, healthcare and education problems of the Roma.

Although it is a young organization, its success is indicated by the successfully implemented projects and by its constantly growing volunteer base. The members and volunteers of the organization regularly hold community programs, development trainings, and events that nurture Roma traditions.

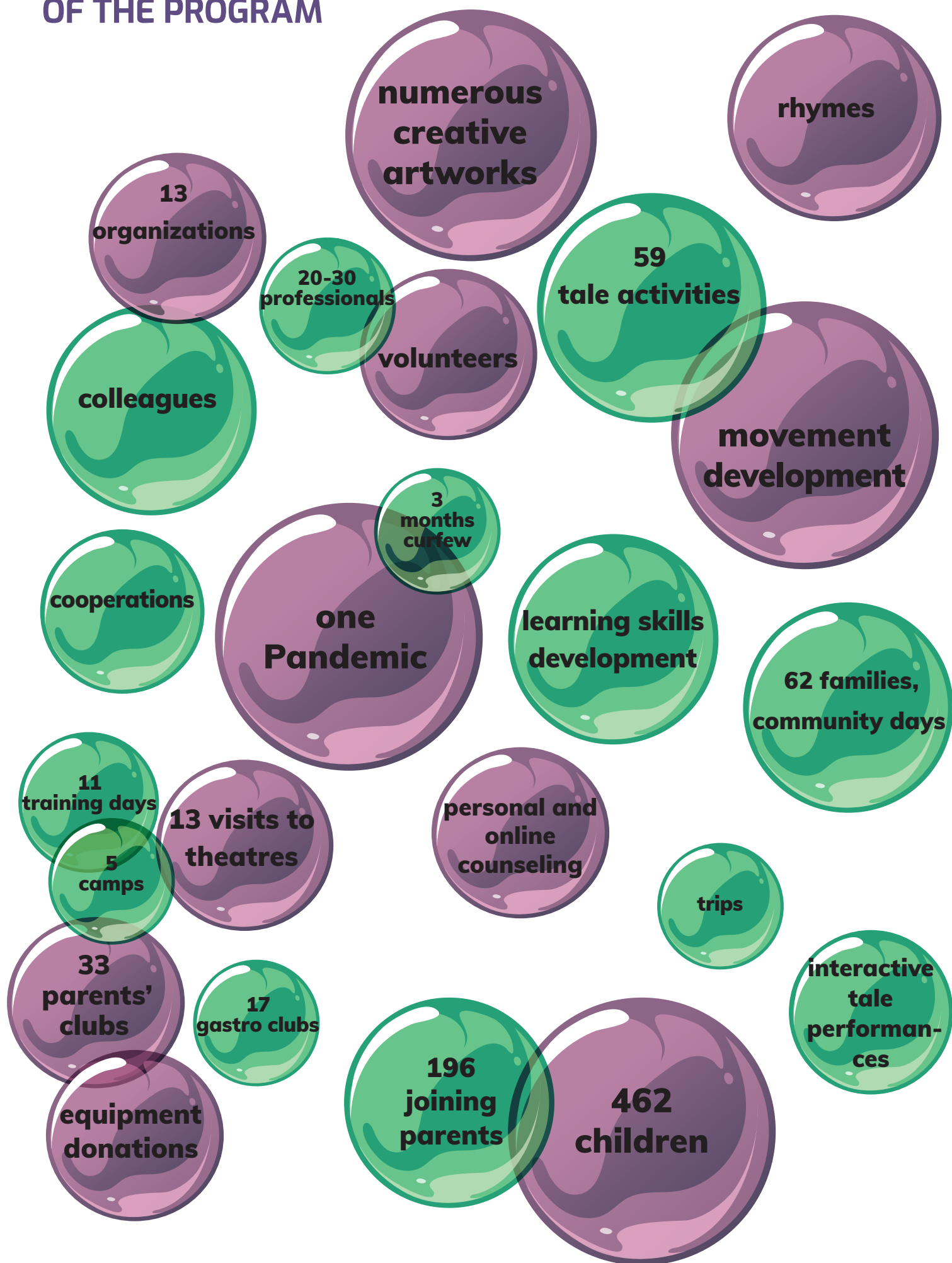


There is a growing demand and need to develop the early skills and competencies of the Roma children living in the Tower House of Jóságáros housing estate in Nyíregyháza, therefore their program aimed the children living there and who are under the age of eight. The program season started with a recruitment event for the community of Jóságáros, which was enriched by creative crafting, obstacle racing, interactive story processing and face painting. The local library and the Glasshouse host SZIROM Playhouse where children's activities are organized in two age groups weekly. They play with younger children, under the age of four, and parents through musical and movement programs. Games, interactive tales, rhymes and folk songs, other music lessons and creative program elements come to the fore during the movement and rhythmic activities of the 5-8 years old children.

Due to the pandemic, they switched to digital activities, which lasted for 13 weeks with weekly challenges. The common family experience, the group dynamics was strengthened by a trip, when they had the opportunity to do so. An open program for well-to-do families was also organized, where Roma and non-Roma could spend an afternoon together, and during which a street theater group provided an interactive program. The organization tends to develop itself and strengthen its professional collaborations thus they contacted the CSERÖKE Association in order to change experience.



THE MAIN RESULTS AND FIGURES OF THE SECOND SEASON OF THE PROGRAM



PRESENTATION OF THE CARPATHIAN FOUNDATION AS THE OWNER OF THE PROGRAM

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Since our establishment, we have donated nearly \$ 16 million to municipalities and hundreds of non-profit, non-governmental organizations. The main strategic objective of the Foundation is to develop the region's human resources and to reduce poverty and social exclusion in the interests of development of deprived rural areas, disadvantaged communities and minorities.

The main objectives of our current programs are to support initiatives by NGOs and local communities operating in disadvantaged rural areas, and vulnerable groups and disadvantaged young people, raising public awareness.

Established in 1995 within an international framework, then registered in Hungary as an independent organization in 2002, the mission of the Carpathian Foundation is to improve quality of life of the people living in the Carpathian region, to preserve the social, ethnic, cultural and natural values of the region, to support its sustainable development, especially in border regions.

The Foundation engages in grant-making programs through restricted call for proposals, development programs to support disadvantaged rural areas and communities, carrying out projects and awarding scholarships.



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