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Healthy communities - nationwide project in Slovakia: “The work we do, the support we need”

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The main goal of the Healthy Communities is the improvement of health Roma communities by increasing the levels of education the levels of education and employment. The most extensive project activity is the daily systematic work in field. The main pillar of the project are the health mediators and coordinators who work in cooperation with healthcare providers (doctors) and municipal governments.

Given the conditions, work in the field - where most of the activities are carried out - is considered to be very challenging. The work requires preparation, experience, ability to make decisions, professional knowledge, specific communication skills. By the end of 2015, the number of health mediators and coordinators will reach 288. Health mediators will be working in 264 different locations. Activities are focused on segregated Roma communities, mainly women and children. In project cooperates: 725 primary contact healthcare providers (general practitioners, pediatricians), elementary school teachers, mayors, special helping professions in target settlements (804 totally in Slovakia).

Thanks to the project by October 2014 achieved the following **Results:**

- Increase the assesment of Roma health Increase health literacy and health care access
Improve human resource capacity, personal and communal hygiene in settlements
- Increase vaccination rates and preventive healthcare acces for children and adults
- Establish contacts and improve communication among general practitioners, pediatricians, local councils and the Roma community
- Increase sexual health awareness, reductions in transmittable diseases (hepatitis A and B).
- Through positive examples we increase interest and motivate community members into increased activity in addressing the adverse health and social situations.
- The benefits of the project are:
 - The place of work is the field itself.
 - Building and improving the quality of social capital in segregated settlements. Improving relations between the minority and the majority. Cooperation and synergy with other professionals providing assistance.
 - Addressing long-term unresolved or neglected areas, i.e.lack of clean water,waste water disposal.
 - Monitoring of the state of health of the local Roma community.

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