R4D SUPPORTS THE SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL GROWTH OF ROMA CHILDREN IN SERBIA

Background
In Serbia, the CIP-Centre for Interactive Pedagogy and Romanipen, in partnership with the Open Society Foundation (OSF), implemented the program for children and families – Strong from the Start – Dam Len Phaka (“Give Them Wings”). The program seeks to facilitate the development of enabling and safe family settings for Roma children aged 0 to 7 living in Roma settlements by building parents’ skills and competencies. Too many children are not afforded positive early experiences and children from marginalized communities, such as the Roma in Eastern Europe, tend to be at a greater disadvantage. According to the 2011 Serbian census, 2.1 percent of the population is Roma, although the true population is believed to be 2-4 times higher (UNDP, 2006). The Roma have been historically marginalized, living in higher rates of poverty and with poorer access to health, sanitation, infrastructure, and educational opportunities.

Research
Results for Development (R4D) is leading a two-year impact evaluation of the effectiveness of the program. The evaluation considers parent attitudes and behaviors and direct child outcomes, but the principle indicator agreed to by the study team and the implementing partners is child’s social-emotional development, as observed on IDELA’s direct child assessment.

Results
At midline, children 3.5-6.5 years of age who participated in the program demonstrated significantly higher levels of social-emotional development than children in comparison communities that did not participate in this program, even when controlling for things like parent education levels and socioeconomic status. Importantly, differences between program and comparison children disappear for program group children participating in ten or fewer workshops, suggesting that participation in the workshops could be causing improved social-emotional development.

Response
These results should be encouraging to partners considering parenting programs, particularly given that positive results on child development are already appearing after just 8 months of program implementation. CIP-Centre, Romanipen, OSF and R4D are committed to continuing to improve the program implementation as well as parent and child attendance in order to enable further improvements in the home environment for young children.

Contact
If you have questions or require further information please contact idela@savechildren.org.