

# Slovo 21, z.s. and the Path to Safe Homes Free from Domestic Violence

The organization fights discrimination, empowers Roma, and supports the integration of foreigners.

The **Mluv Nahlas (Speak Out) project**, funded under **OPZ+ Call No. 44**, aims to **reduce domestic violence** against Roma women, **strengthen their self-confidence**, **promote open discussion** about violence, and **collect relevant data** on its prevalence within the Roma community. At the same time, the project focuses on the **personal development** of young Roma women and men, including raising their awareness about domestic violence. The project runs from September 1, 2023, to August 31, 2025.

## The Mluv Nahlas project addresses:

- The taboo and minimization of domestic violence in Romani communities
- Prejudices about violence as part of Romani traditions and customs
- Low self-esteem among Romani women
- The lack of relevant data on the prevalence of domestic and gender-based violence in Romani communities
- The need to educate the younger generation to overcome ingrained behavior patterns

## MAIN FINDINGS

### RESEARCH ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

The research showed that **66 %** of respondents know someone who **has experienced domestic violence**, whether it is themselves or someone from their surroundings.

If they were **witnesses** to domestic violence, **69 % would report it**. However, if they **became victims themselves**, **only 61% would report it**. The most common reasons for silence are **financial dependence or fear of the perpetrator**.

### LEARNING AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

The project promotes **education and awareness on domestic violence** while fostering personal development. Participants gain new knowledge and **insights about themselves**.

### SUMMER SCHOOL AND SUPPORT FOR ADOLESCENTS

Another success of the project is **the support of adolescents' motivation for education**. Participants in the summer school not only change their perspective on domestic violence and relationships, but also engage in activities that develop their personalities. Some of them decided to **continue their studies and apply for secondary school as a result**.

### OPPORTUNITY TO OPEN UP

**Self-help groups provide** Romani women with **a safe space** where they can share both their worries and joys. They openly talk about domestic violence as well as everyday life.



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## CHANGES IN THE LIVES OF THE TARGET GROUP

A key benefit of the project is **the support provided to members of self-help groups**, helping them **break free from environments of domestic violence**. With the knowledge gained and boosted self-esteem, these women begin to experience positive changes, which are reflected in their life stories.

“  
Before, I didn't know what domestic violence encompassed. I experienced 3 years of psychological abuse and didn't realize that it counted as well. Then I started addressing it and got a divorce.  
”  
(participant of the self-help group about leaving the abuser)

## FIVE PILLARS OF THE FIGHT AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Determine the extent of the problem and tailor help

Create a safe space for victims

Promote the self-development and awareness of Romani women

Focus on prevention among the younger generation

Spread awareness on social media

## IMPLEMENTATION EXPERIENCE

A key element of successful **cooperation is trust**, which played a crucial role in collecting sensitive data on domestic violence and in motivating women to participate in self-help groups. This success is the result of the organization's good reputation and **the work of the coordinator's assistants in the local areas**.

Although a sufficient number of participants for the self-help groups were recruited, **Roma women often face obstacles from their family environment**. Even when women are interested, they encounter problems with childcare or their husbands or partners do not allow them to participate in activities outside the home.

The organization plans **to expand activities in the future and include men in the target groups**, intending to use the technique of theater of the oppressed.



“  
I consider it a success that I was even able to bring these women together and that we are functioning as a group. Many women have it tough and are forbidden from doing a lot of things. It's not an easy matter. (...) We are open with each other, we know one another well, we have no problem talking about difficult topics, and we trust each other.  
”  
(assistant coordinator in the local area)



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