



The case study describes the progress of a child from disadvantaging environment who is visiting a school club where Feuerstein's Instrumental Enrichment (FIE) method is being utilized.

Model casuistic – Miriam, 12 years old

#### *Personal anamnesis*

Miriam was born to Roma parents who do not care very much for their children. She just came to this world and is part of the family. Despite this she knows how to laugh and find joy in life. For her age she is short and little, quite thin. She seems younger than she is.

#### *Family anamnesis*

The dwelling where Miriam grows up can hardly be called home. Kitchen, living room, bedroom, and bathroom is all found in one larger room. There is little furnishings, most of the space is occupied by beds. Electricity is installed illegally, they burn wood in stove for heating. Next to the room is one small hall, which prevents at least some of the heat escape in winter. It looks even worse from outside, no trees, lawn, just mud and loads of garbage, unpleasant smell and rats running around.

Parents of Miriam are not married. Mother (\*1985) had her first child when she was seventeen. Along with her partner (\*1980) they have not finished basic education. They have never worked. Their income consists of child benefits and social benefits. They spend their days smoking and drinking in front of the house. Miriam (\*2006) was born a third child, she has three brothers and three sisters.

The children seem neglected. They wake up and prepare for school on their own, they do not bring snacks. They do not have proper shoes, their clothes are dirty, torn and inappropriate to their physique. Miriam had no winter jacket in the last winter. She wore three jumpers she would not take off for the time of school.

#### *School anamnesis*

Miriam entered the zeroth grade no sooner than 2014 when she was 8 years old. This was caused by her education being postponed. Mother was not able to provide sufficient reasoning why this happened. She never attended any other educational facility. According to the psychological examination she bore no deficit signs.

Like most of the children from secluded Roma communities Miriam had the biggest difficulty at school with Slovak language. A huge obstacle in communication is also the specific nature of her voice. It is hoarse, too rough, like a voice of an old smoker. She suffered unpleasant remarks from her

classmates because of her voice. Despite her age she could not cope with curriculum of the first grade. She refused to work in classes and disturbed them often. She did not respect the rules of the school. Class teacher has therefore recommended her for a special-pedagogical examination, based on which she was moved to a second grade of special class the next year.

Lesser difficulty of curriculum, different collective and teacher changed Miriam. Positively as she got better results and it is clear she understands what she learns. Negatively they affected her behaviour. She began to shout at random at times least suitable. She pretended to sleep in class. On her way from school she laid on the road before her classmates and pretended to be dead. She enjoyed herself during all of this. Neither talking to her nor reprimanding her helped. After a while those displays disappeared. Despite all this her teachers do not assess her as a problem child. According to them she is a reasonable child who can be worked with if she is in the mood for it. Miriam is now 12 years old and successfully finished the third grade of special class at the elementary school. She knows all the letters of alphabet and can read a printed text. She can memorize a song or a poem. She can add and subtract up to twenty. She likes to draw, cut with scissors, and glue things. She is manually sound.

Miriam likes going to school. Her parents, however, do not pay adequate attention to her. If she is ill or does not have anything to wear, they leave her at home without informing school. She then receives absence without leave.

#### *Social anamnesis*

Miriam is similar to her classmates at the first glance. When playing and during other activities it becomes clear she is older. She acts casually in the collective but she is not dependent on it. She can play on her own. She does have a best friend she would hang on to. She treats everyone equally. Her mood is changing. She respects adult to some extent. To shout at or assert dominance brings no success. She likes puzzle the most, plays ball, paints very nicely, and has a sense of colour. When we ask her to do something she is eager to help. After school she helps with household chores, she can cook, clean, take care of younger siblings, she brings in water when required and can bathe on her own. In summer she spends most of her time at a nearby spring, which serves local children for swimming pool.

She has a constant urge to nibble her thumb.

#### *Difficulties found after joining the club*

Miriam began to visit school club right after entering the school in 2014. At the time we worked with standard methods, not FIE. Miriam did not really come through among her twelve classmates. She sat quietly in the back row and watched what was going on around her.

She had no difficulties making eye contact with an adult and listen to instruction. The problem was her not understanding Slovak at all. She tried to make out from our eyes what we were saying. Our communication must have looked silly at times. We asked her to close the door and Miriam went on to get pencils watching us the whole time to tell what it was we wanted from her. That is why we mainly in the beginning used the help of the assistant who helped us translate to Roma. Despite the nature of her voice she liked to sing. Only when singing she was not ashamed.

Tasks she approached with joy. If she had difficulties she would push all materials aside, crossed her arms, and refused to continue. She was afraid to ask for help when she did not understand something. She preferred to observe one of her classmates and copy what he or she was doing.

Miriam need to ascertain everything she did she did right. She was unsure when she did not receive feedback and refused to continue until she received it.

She felt relaxed in the collective, she liked to advise others playing games what they should do. If the game, however, was not developing according to her idea she began to act aggressively. In such cases she would play on her, separated from others. She was unable to work in collective or even in pairs. Every task ended with disagreement, after which Miriam retreated.

#### *Progress under the influence of FIE*

Miriam made huge progress during the four years in the school club. We worked with FIE method for three years. We finished two instruments, Organization of Dots and Recognizing Emotion.

We began to work with Organization of Dots when Miriam was in the first grade. She already possessed some basic vocabulary. Despite that she remain silent while working on first few pages. She only sat quietly and observed what was going on. She did not respond to encouragement. When we turned our attention to her she was bashful. But she finished the pages without difficulties. When we reached the pages with an error where the difficulty goes up she did not know how to proceed since the very first line. She did not ask for help. So we kept eyeing her up. As usual she pushed the page away from her and began sulking. She stared into the ground for a while and muttered for herself how she was not going to do this, the page is stupid and she does not know this. Afterwards she began to observe her classmates. She realized everyone is working and no one noticed her troubles. At that moment she pulled the page back in front of her and muttered she would do it if all others are able to. And she finished the page without any assistance.

Miriam being able to finish page with an error is visible even at other club activities, such as drawing. Previously when she was not able to draw a window of a house as well as she deemed necessary she would throw away the whole paper and began anew. Now she can accept imperfect drawings or she can correct them until she is satisfied.

The influence of FIE is visible in her approach to work. Before she starts drawing she first thinks where is she going to start drawing and will she draw as first. She draws in the air above the paper and whispers to herself her plan. She does not go in headlong as she used to.

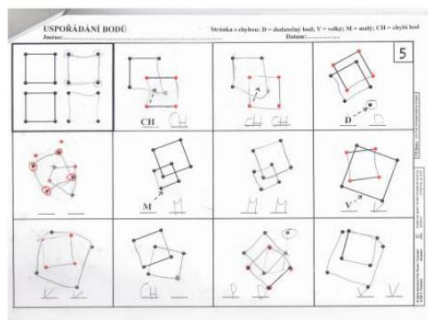
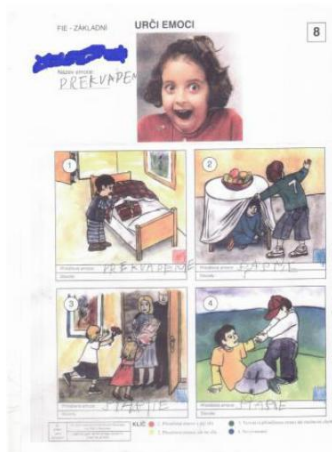
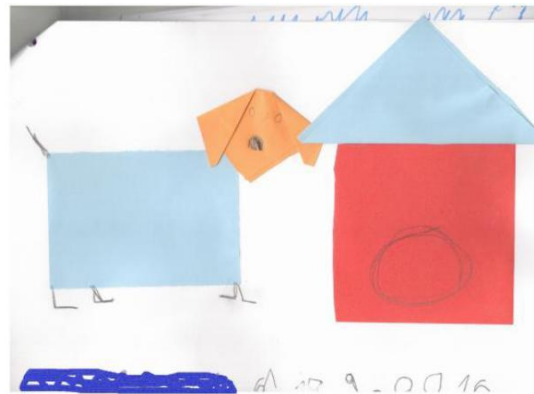
Gradually she began to take part in discussions if only with a single word. Because no one is laughing at her for her voice in the club, she is slowly getting self-confidence and courage to speak. During last year Miriam communicated very well even without covering her mouth with her hands. Last time she told the whole class how she makes pasta with tomatoes at home. She remains more comfortable in the role of listener rather than speaker.

She learned how to ask for help. She ceased being ashamed for not understand something. She overcame her own fears and shares her problem with us.

When playing a game as collective she takes on less dominant role, listens to the needs of her classmates more, and is even able to settle on compromise in order for the game to continue.

*Conclusion*

Miriam is about to go to the fourth grade in special class. Her class teacher asked us about what kind of marvellous things we do at the club. Miriam is the only one from her class who is visiting the club and compared to her classmates at school she behaves much better, learns better and thinks faster.



*Because of the nature of information provided the name of the child was changed.*

Velka Ida, August 2018



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