

MEET YOUR GYNECOLOGIST



Background

It was determined that Roma women in Prilep may not be aware that changes in the rules of the Fund for Health Insurance beginning on September 1, 2011 have affected their health rights in terms of accessing gynecological services. In order to define the type of obstacles that Romani women have in the realization of their health rights and in this way exercise their right to have a primary gynecologist and a free PAP test according to the campaign implemented by the Ministry of Health, **ROMA S.O.S. with the support of Peace Corps implemented the project *Meet your Gynecologist* from September 2012 – March 2013.**

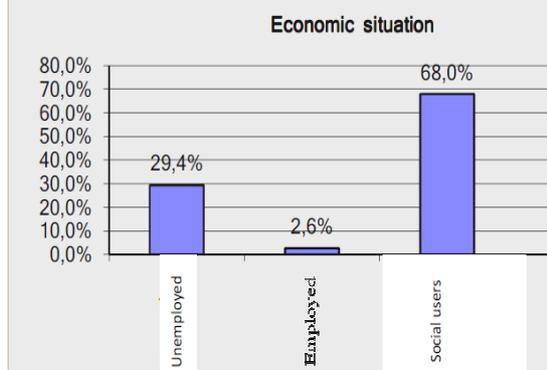
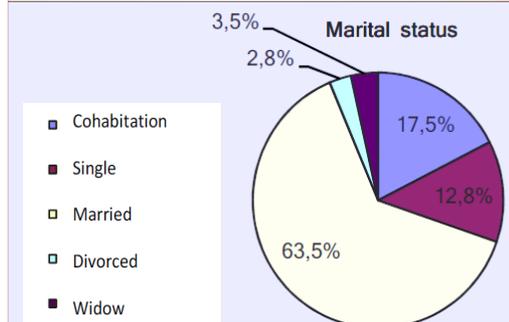
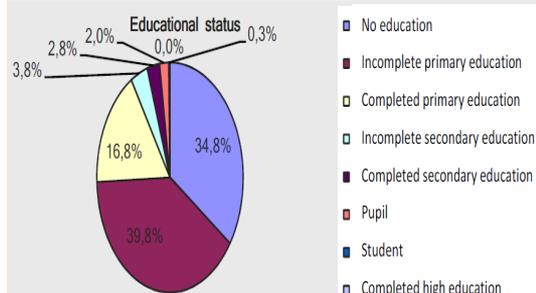
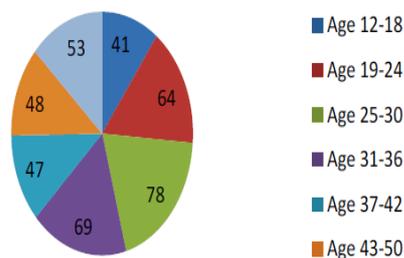
One of the key activities of the project was conducting **door to door research where 400 Roma women from the settlement Trizla 2 in Prilep** were interviewed on issues related to their general and gynecological health, their knowledge of gynecological services and fees charged for those services, and their level of knowledge regarding the importance of caring for their gynecological health.

Identified problems:

- The majority of Romani women think that they have a registered primary gynecologist because they have their stamp in the health booklets. But women are not informed that a change in the Health Insurance Fund has occurred and this is no longer considered as having a registered primary gynecologist.
- Many Romani women have been inappropriately charged for examinations, PAP tests and other gynecological services that should be free of charge. One of the reasons is because there is no clear price list or list of free health services in the gynecological clinics that women are able to see.
- Romani women visit gynecologist only when they have a need or some gynecological problem, not to control or care for their health. This is based on the reason that they are charged for every gynecological service during the examination, and they are unable to pay the costs.
- Many of the Romani women choose abortions as a means of family planning because they do not use contraceptives. This is because women think that contraceptives are not safe for their health and they do not tend to use them.



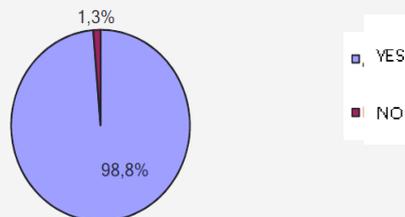
DEMOGRAPHIC DATA



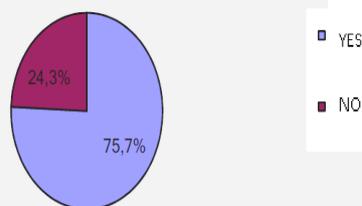
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HEALTH STATUS

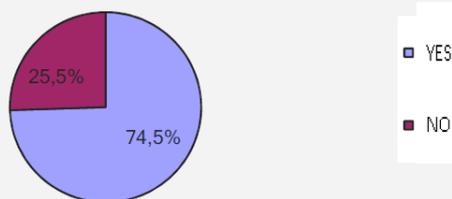
Do you have health insurance?



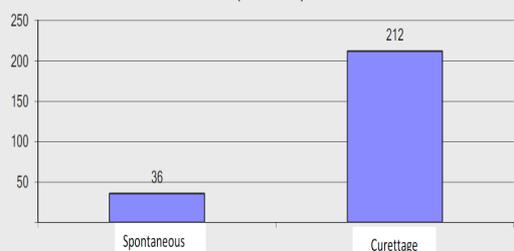
Do you have registered primary gynecologist?



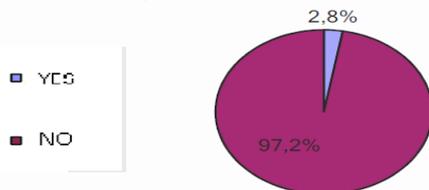
If examination at the primary gynecologist is charged?



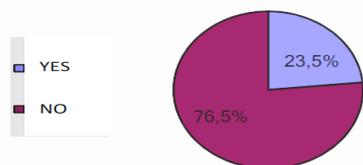
Number of abortions (118 answers)



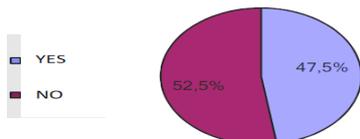
Do you use contraceptives?



Do you have made PAP test till now?



If you have made PAP test, it have been charged?



Our analyze of the collected data guided us to the following conclusion:

There is no established direct and preventative system or mechanism to inform the patients when their gynecologist is deleted from the records of the registered doctors in the Health Insurance Fund. Deletion can be a consequence of the termination of the agreement between the Health Insurance Fund and the Gynecological clinic for providing health care from the compulsory health insurance for the insured persons in the Health Insurance Fund. However, the facsimile of the initially registered gynecologist which still exists in the patient's health insurance card after the deletion, guides the woman to visit the same gynecologist for examinations even though he/she is not the registered one at the time of visit.

Patients can protect themselves from such situations only if they voluntarily inform themselves about the status of their registered gynecologist before they request health service and that can be done on the website of the Health Insurance Fund. The Health Insurance Fund has set a good opportunity to check online the status of insured and registered doctor, and free phone for information, BUT these services can only be used by persons who are literate, have access to the internet and knowledge of computer skills, and the majority of Romani women are not in this category of persons based on their low educational and economic status.

Romani women are not informed about the prices when getting health services (private or covered by Health Insurance Fund) and because of that they are disposed to illegal and improper charge for the service. Gynecological clinics charge different prices for the same service for different patients. Analyses show that this situation is due to the lack of clearly defined gynecological services that should be offered by the registered gynecologist, as well as accurately determined cost of the service in accordance with the Decision on determining the amount of the participation of insured persons in the total cost of health services and drugs.

Patients often do not receive receipts for the services, which prevents them to report the abuse. State and Sanitary Health Inspectorate and Health Insurance Fund perform regular control over the work of Gynecological clinics, but can take concrete actions only after submitted written complaint by patients with evidence of the abuse/violation of rights (receipt for the charged fee) that as a mechanism is not used by Romani women.

Male Roma are not educated, not informed nor aware about the usage of contraceptive means due to Romani women are subjected to unwilling pregnancy and abortions as well as to sexually transmitted illness which affect women's reproductive health. Usually Romani women are the target group in different activities on the usage of contraceptive means but it is not considered that the final decision for purchasing and usage of the means mainly depends on the husband who at the same time is not consulted or instructed.