



**EveryChild Moldova's Programme
Experience:
Improving Children's Lives through
Deinstitutionalisation**

April 2013

Acknowledgements

This report was prepared by independent consultants N. Beth Bradford and Peter Evans in consultation with EveryChild and Partnerships for Every Child in Moldova. It drew significantly on case study research and recommendations produced for EveryChild in 2012 by Peter Evans¹. This report was made possible by the support, in particular, of Lucy Morris of EveryChild UK, and Stela Grigoras and the staff team of Partnerships for Every Child.

The report is intended to be a resource for programme managers, project workers and authors initiating or participating in the design and implementation of programmes and projects aiming to improve children's lives through deinstitutionalisation. It is intended for sharing with relevant networks and has been placed in the public domain as a resource for practitioners engaged with issues related to children in institutional care and development of systems for deinstitutionalisation. The following resources offer more information:

www.everychild.org.uk

www.p4ec.md

www.familyforeverychild.org

EveryChild.

envisions a world where every child enjoys the right to a safe and caring family, free from poverty, violence and exploitation. The organisation's core principles include the belief that every child: has the right to grow up in a safe and caring family; has the right to go to school; has the right to be heard; deserves the chance to play; deserves the opportunity to fulfil their potential; and deserves the chance of a childhood. Programmes and services are built on the knowledge that the care and security of a family make all the difference in the world to a child's chances of having not only a childhood, but a future.

Keeping families together
Keeping children safe
Getting children back into families
Making sure children are heard
Learning, to do better
Influencing and inspiring change

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Cover photograph courtesy of EveryChild-UK Moldova 2010 - Maria is an emergency foster carer, taking in children such as Dima whose parents need a short time to resolve crises or problems that may put the child at risk of losing parental care, including being institutionalized.

Image ©Chloe Hall/EveryChild

¹ Evans, P (2012) *A Case Study of EveryChild Moldova's Programme on Improving Children's Lives Through Deinstitutionalisation & Recommendations for Actors & Stakeholders Planning to Take Future Action to Achieve the Closure of All Institutions in Moldova*

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List of Acronyms

ABC	Advisory Boards of Children
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DfID	Department for International Development (UK)
ECHO	European Community Humanitarian Aid Office
ECT	European Children's Trust
EvC	EveryChild
EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
GoM	Government of Moldova
LA	Local Authority
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoLSPF	Ministry of Labor, Social Protection & Family
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OPM	Oxford Policy Management
P4EC	Partnerships for Every Child (Parteneriate Pentru Fiecare Copil)
Raion	Region / District
SAFPD	Regional Social Assistance & Family Protection Department
TACIS	Technical Assistance to the Commonwealth of Independent States
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

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Foreword

With the release of this report EveryChild and Partnerships for Every Child celebrate over ten years of improving children's lives in Moldova. We would like to acknowledge the commitment and will of the Government of Moldova in working for children and their families, and our partnerships with other non-governmental that helped bring about lasting change. We all remember that just ten years ago, the only option for a child who had to leave their parents was life in an institution.

- 1.3% of all Moldovan children went into institutions staying an average of 7-8 years.
- 1 out of 5 lost all contact with their family.
- Society encouraged parents to leave their children in care.
- 8 out of 10 children in care had one, if not both, of their parents still living.
- 48% of placements were in response to the requests of parents.
- There were no social workers or social services
- There was resistance to foster care as a viable alternative
- The government was reluctant to close institutions as they employed over 5,800 people

Over the past decade we have all worked hard toward sustainable change towards better lives for all children. Dramatic shifts have taken place: the number of children in institutions has dropped dramatically; over 7,000 children are living in family-based alternative care; 15 residential institutions have been closed; there are 1,200 trained Moldovan social workers, at least one in each community; 105 foster carers are employed by local authorities; numerous services have been established; and policy and legislation have been strengthened. EveryChild stood beside Moldova to ensure these changes, particularly for children without parental care. This report highlights that work.

Dreaming of the future for Moldova's children and their families, Partnerships for Every Child will continue to advocate for children by:

- Continuing residential care reforms and developing alternative care services and early intervention programmes that support the children in loving and caring families;
- Developing and implementing programmes and services aimed at strengthening good parenting and strong, united families with the capacities to provide appropriate care and protection to their children;
- Supporting the diversification of foster care services; and
- Encouraging child and family friendly schools that provide education and support irrespective of ability, ethnicity or religion.

In celebration of a decade of change for children's rights in Moldova, EveryChild and Partnerships for Every Child presents our experience in long-term organisational, service and systems development of the deinstitutionalisation programme. We hope that it captures our learning in a way that proactively shares it with EveryChild's branches and partners, with Family for Every Child Coalition members worldwide, and with other organisations working towards the deinstitutionalisation of children around the globe. Children must be protected from violence, abuse and neglect. We must continue to develop the capacities of government and non-government actors alike to recognize and respect children's rights.

Children must continue to have their voices heard.



Stela Grigoras

Director, Partnerships for Every Child (Parteneriate Pentru Fiecare Copil)

"I remember distinctly when I finally changed my thinking. I was very resistant. I attended a national conference about one year ago and there a young girl spoke about leaving residential care and returning to her family. She said to us that even though the soup at the school was full of meat – rich and good for her – it would never have the smell of home – it would never smell as rich as her mother's simple meatless broth. I cried. I realized that no matter the conditions we provide a residential school is never a family; never home."

Deputy Director for Education, Calarasi

1. Introduction

1.1 What is the Purpose of the Programme Review?

EveryChild Moldova (EvC) was established in the Republic of Moldova (hereafter referred to as “Moldova”) in 2001, yet began its work in 1995, initially through the work of European Children’s Trust UK (ECT) and built upon the important experience of ECT in both Moldova and neighbouring Romania. EvC has grown in capacity, experience and credibility over the years. This resulted in the establishment of a strong Moldovan legally established and fully managed organisation, *Partnerships for Every Child* (in Romanian, Parteneriate Pentru Fiecare Copil) (P4EC), which officially launched in April of 2012. Today P4EC continues to have a strong presence as an important partner of the Government of Moldova (GoM), a strong advocate for systems reform, a child welfare service provider, and a child protection capacity building entity. P4EC also continues to be partnered with EvC-UK and maintains a high profile among the top child welfare non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in the country. For the purpose of consistency this report refers to “the work of EvC” as work done under this name in the past, as well as on-going initiatives under the direction and management of P4EC.

This Programme Review documents the evolution of the EvC Programme since 1994, presenting the development of interventions to **improve the lives of children through deinstitutionalisation** and identifying the best practices and lessons that may be relevant, useful and replicable to other initiatives and organisations around the world. It investigates and documents the programmatic approach to deinstitutionalisation as a model of good practice. It makes recommendations for stakeholders in Moldova toward achieving the closure of all institutions for children in the country by building on the country’s work to date and including the practices modelled by EvC.²

The research and resulting report highlight major points in the evolution and growth of the organisation and its programmes, as well as significant milestones and accomplishments that have led to best practices. The focus is on interventions with direct impact on services for children without adequate parental care, children in institutions and those at risk for out-of-family placement. EvC has developed and implemented a wide range other projects and initiatives (see Annex A).

The Programme Review attempts to answer a number of key questions with regard to the evolution of the deinstitutionalisation programme:

- What did the programme set out to achieve and why?
- How did the programme set out to achieve the intended changes in the situation of children in Moldova?
- What happened during the lifetime of the programme?
- What Theory of Change (explicit or implicit) guided the programmes objectives and activities at the outset?
- What assumptions were made about how the desired changes would happen?
- In the case of positive changes achieved, to what extent can the changes be considered to be sustainable, and why?
- What significant points of learning can be identified from the programme about how change happens, in order to achieve positive and sustainable changes in the lives of children as a result of the deinstitutionalisation processes?

² Extract from the TOR for the research consultancy and the TOR report editing consultancy

1.2 What was the Research Methodology?

The Programme Review research methodology relied principally on key programme and organisational documents, as well as relevant country documents such as child and family status reports and child protection legislation (see Annex C). Semi-structured interviews were conducted as part of the initial research with EvC Moldova managers, past and present, project staff, local public administrations, foster carers and members of the Moldova Foster Carers Association, Advisory Boards of Children (ABC), representatives of other non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection & Family (MoLSPF) (see Annex B). The interviews provided an important perspective on the activities in Moldova as the approaches to deinstitutionalisation developed, systems reform progressed, and EvC's theory of change coalesced. Additional child or family beneficiary interviews were not conducted due to the extensive information provided from interviews of the on-going *Longitudinal Research into Children's Reintegration in Moldova* currently being undertaken jointly by P4EC and EvC-UK. The initial phase reports from this work provided larger and broader interview samples sizes.

2. Context: Moldova & Its Children

Moldova declared independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, and independence was internationally recognized in 1992 with membership in the United Nations (UN). Independent Moldova inherited a child welfare system heavily reliant on institutional care as the protective measure for children in vulnerable situations, with heavy investment by the state in the social infrastructure required to maintain such institutions. Community based services, irrespective of the child protection issue, were virtually non-existent. Guardianship and adoption existed, but were options considered secondary to child care in residential institutions. The system itself encouraged parents to leave children in care, which diminished individual parental, family and community responsibilities for the protection of children. In 1995, when ECT first stepped into the country, Moldova had a population of approximately 3.8 million people,³ 1.4 million children under 18, and 17,000 children living in residential care.⁴

The child protection system was fragmented, inefficient and oriented almost completely to institutionalization as the solution for any child in need of care or protection, including for reasons of disability, poverty, parental migration, or special educational needs. Responsibilities for children without parental care were centralized and spread across three ministries at the national level: Ministry of Education (MoE), Ministry of Health, and MoLSPF. The vast majority of institutions (and children) were under the responsibility of the MoE, found in EvC's early years to be the most powerful ministry and the most reluctant to reform the child protection system. The division of responsibilities across ministries resulted in a total lack of policy coordination and implementation. According to EvC, this was the biggest obstacle to reforming the protection system, impeding the development of alternatives to institutionalisation and community-based initiatives, responsibility at the regional and local government level, and leading to an inability to redirect budget mechanisms and financial resources away from institutions to family- and child-centred protection and welfare.⁵

³ Population statistics reported by www.nationmaster.com

⁴ Figure provided by P4EC

⁵ Interview communication with Stela Grigoras, P4EC Director 2/2012

Year	Population <18 years	Population <18 in residential institutions
1995	1,458,454	17,000
2002	1,009,046	13,486
2007	918,892	11,096 ⁶
2011	745,606 ⁷	5,813
2012	784,000	4,515 ⁸

Table 1: Trends of Institutionalized Children

According to EvC, as confirmed in official reports,⁹ the most common reason for placement in residential care was the socio-economic situation of the family. Insufficient resources and lack of community services exposed children with disabilities to the highest risk for institutionalisation. Social services were poorly developed, maladjusted to local needs, and inappropriately targeted a limited number of groups. Most young people “graduating” institutional care lacked the skills for independent living and received little to no support for integration into society. As alternative services began to be developed, civil society assumed the primary role for modeling better practices. In 1993 Moldova took an important step by adopting the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

As is common in the region, Moldova has traditionally relied on institutionalization of children as a protection measure. Poverty and limited family support services at community level led to placement of thousands of children from poor families and of children with disabilities in residential care. This is beginning to change, and the country has made great progress in reforming the system; with 40% fewer children in residential care now than just four years ago.¹⁰

Today, with a current population of 3.5 million, comprising 32 raions (districts/regions), 3 municipalities and 2 autonomous regions, Moldova is the poorest country in Europe with 25% of the population living on less than \$2 a day and many families struggling to care for their children.

In 2010, more than 10,000 children were said to be separated from their families, with just over 6,000 in substitute care including small family type group homes, shelters and foster care.¹¹ The demographic environment is defined by a declining population, a declining proportion of children, and a high rate of migration. Approximately 59% of the population lives in rural areas where poverty-related issues are exacerbated by a lack of employment opportunities and a lack of access to social protection services. Issues such as high unemployment, worker migration, human trafficking, child labour, decentralization, policy reform and the potential for political instability, continue to add to the complexity and challenge of child protection reform. Moldova continues to be highly

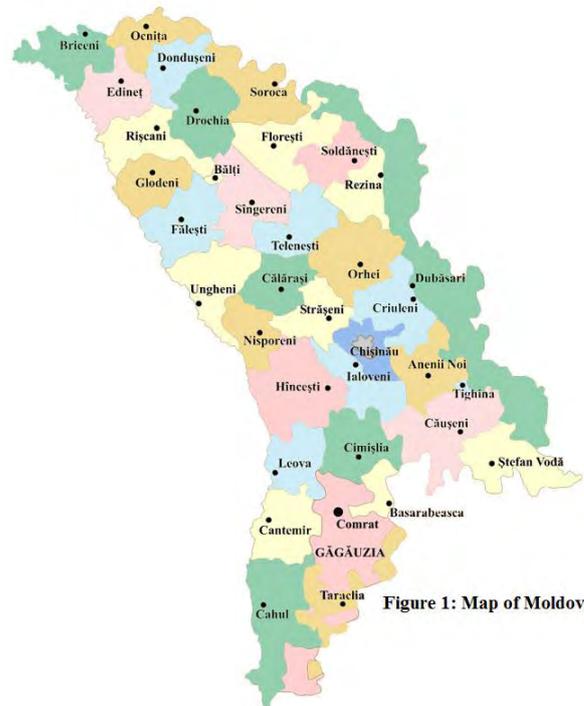


Figure 1: Map of Moldova

⁶ UNICEF: Growing Up in the Republic of Moldova (2008)

⁷ UNICEF: Children of Moldova Brief (2011) & population statistics from the National Bureau of Statistics

⁸ Figure of 4,435 taken from MoE Nov 2012 report combined with the number of children resident in a TB sanatoria in 2012 (80)

⁹ Ibid UNICEF (2008)

¹⁰ UNICEF: Children of Moldova Brief (2011)

¹¹ UNICEF: Master Plan for Deinstitutionalisation Moldova (2007)

dependent on foreign assistance for economic growth and social protection. While the country has experienced steady economic growth since 2001,¹² the current global financial crisis has lowered household income, accelerated migration of the working-aged population and reduced tax revenue.

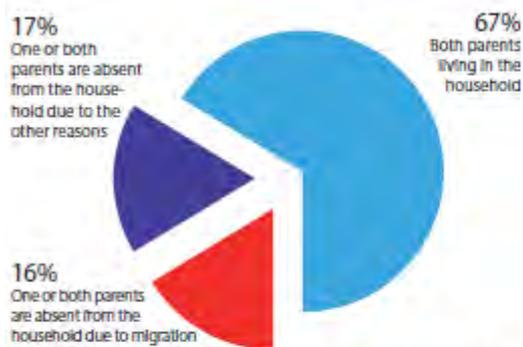


Figure 2: Child Population by Presence of Parents 2009

¹³Loss of parental care in Moldova is caused by a complex array of underlying and immediate factors, including: household poverty; violence, abuse and neglect at home; parental migration; lack of access to quality education and healthcare and a lack of social protection services close to home. Additionally, inappropriate policies which support family separation and institutionalization of children, as well as the persistent belief of parents, practitioners and decision-makers that the state can care for children better than families are other factors leading to the loss of parental care.

Alcohol abuse and dependency are also key factors. It is estimated that 1 in 4 children has at least one parent living or working abroad.¹⁴ Children with both parents working abroad are the most vulnerable and are at greater risk of neglect, abuse and placement in large-scale residential care.

With a rigorous National Strategy for Reform of the Residential Institution System 2007-2012 (“National Strategy”) and pending release of a new reform strategy in 2013 by the GoM, the oversupply of residential care and the undersupply of alternative family- and community-based care has shifted. There are several reasons for this transformation: changes in policy, the development of family-type alternatives and social support programmes for families, increased public awareness, and in large part this shift is due to the efforts and projects of EvC and other NGOs, as well as the engagement of civil society as a key voice for reform.

Re-allocation of funds towards community- based preventative services and family-based alternatives continues to be a challenge as residential institutions close. Reform of the child protection system has been largely decentralized to the Regional Social Assistance & Family Protection Departments (SAFPD) of raion (region)-level administrations.¹⁵ At the raion level a network of community social workers provide support to families in their communities. National policy is moving strongly towards large-scale deinstitutionalisation of children and the protection or support of children within their families and communities. National, regional and local policy is aligned with the principles of the UNCRC and UN Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children, with a focus on achieving significant national impact. EvC and P4EC have been there every step of the way. Decentralization of the residential system has been relatively rapid, beginning in late 2010.

3. What Did the Programme Set out to Achieve and Why?

3.1 European Children’s Trust in Moldova: The Beginning

According to the EvC, the Romanian Orphanage Trust (“The Trust”) was founded in 1990 to work to support Romania’s residential institutions. However by 1997, it had moved toward developing systems of alternative care focused on improving the quality of life for children through family-based care.¹⁶ The Trust developed programmes in seven counties of Romania, eventually forming practice models for national replication. The European Children’s Trust (ECT) was founded in 1995 by the

¹²UNICEF: Assessment of the Child Care System in Moldova (2009)

¹³ Figure 2 from UNICEF: Children of Moldova Brief (2011)

¹⁴ According to interviews with MoLSPF officials by Peter Evans

¹⁵ Ibid

¹⁶ Archive notes of Donald McCready (2001/2), former chief executive of European Children’s Trust UK

Romanian Orphanage Trust with the aim of expanding work in the region, including a programme in Moldova through a European Union (EU) grant (The Overture Project £50,000).¹⁷

In the years after Moldova became independent, child protection structures in the capital municipality of Chişinău, not to mention the rest of the country, were fragmented across seven Ministries. Those structures were totally lacking in coordination and focus, thus creating an even less effective system of protection than prior to independence.

“When the Soviet Union faded away all the existing structures of the Soviet Union also faded away. We started from the very beginning to build something new. At that time we began to have phenomenon like children begging in the streets”.¹⁸

After assessment of the situation of children, The Commission for Minors in the Municipality of Chişinău concluded that the specialists responsible for the various aspects of child welfare and protection should be brought together under one structure in order to more effectively respond to the needs of vulnerable and at-risk children and their families. Chişinău officials contacted The Trust in 1994, and visited Romania several times to observe and learn from the initiatives there. In May 1997, the Chişinău Directorate of Reintegration and Family Support, subsequently renamed the Directorate for Child Rights Protection, was established. This brought together the various professional functions that were previously fragmented, eventually creating a more fully developed municipal-level approach to child protection. Chişinău’s initiative benefitted from the support of The Trust in those early years.

The earliest documented intervention by ECT in Moldova is the 1995 *Protocol of Collaboration* concluded between the Mayor of Chişinău and ECT. The document outlines agreement under the Overture Programme to link the Strathclyde Regional Council in Scotland, the Regional Government of Piedmont in Italy and Bacău County Council in Romania to support the Chişinău Municipality in establishing a child protection working group with the guidance of ECT. This four-way collaboration had the following objectives:

- To identify cases of abandoned children and achieve their family reintegration
- To organize joint actions of the actors involved in child protection
- To process and provide information to the administration of the Chişinău Municipality and other authorities involved in child protection decision-making

3.2 Every Child in Moldova

In 2001 EvC was incorporated in the UK and subsequently the European Children’s Trust Moldova became EveryChild Moldova. In 2011, EvC celebrated ten years of incredible achievement in support of child protection reform in Moldova, commissioning this research and report to highlight those significant milestones. In April 2012, a huge success was jointly celebrated by EvC-UK and EvC-Moldova, when the fully Moldovan organisation, Partnerships for Every Child, was launched. This process was spearheaded by the success and leadership of the Moldovan team and fully supported by EvC-UK as a committed partner. The timeline, objectives and outcomes, and details on all of the EvC and P4EC projects in Moldova can be found in Annex A. For the purposes of this report “EvC” refers to EveryChild Moldova, and not to the larger organisation EvC-UK or other country affiliates.

EvC set out to improve the lives of Moldova’s children with particular attention to the 17,000 children living in institutions during 1995. Through the development of various initiatives and a range of service models the programme worked to exemplify alternatives to institutionalization, eventually developing a thoroughly planned approach to deinstitutionalisation that encompassed several equally important components. The theory of change that was clearly defined over the first

¹⁷ Ibid

¹⁸ According to Ana Gobjila, former Head of Commission for Minors, Chisinau, in an interview with Peter Evans 13/06/2012

several years became the ‘how’ of the programming. The following section explores in-depth the evolution of this work.

The launching pad for more active engagement in Moldova came after a 1995 visit by The Trust and Chisinau’s Commission, to an institution for girls with disabilities in Hîncești. Children there were reported to be living in appalling conditions, a fact confirmed by the visit. It was a persuasive launching place and the compelling impetus for the development of ECT Moldova’s programme; the spark for advancement of a thoughtful and concerted effort towards the development of a deinstitutionalisation programme. It gave focus to the approach of EvC Moldova from then onward. ECT was involved in Hîncești for the next five years, supporting a local NGO to deliver humanitarian aid and provide rehabilitation and socialization.¹⁹

3.3 What Happened During the Lifetime of the Programme?

Beginning with these first interventions and throughout the organisation’s development as a respected and strong voice for children and families in Moldova there have been a number of key aspects to the approach: innovative direct service models; work with national, regional and local government structures; training and capacity building; policy advocacy and lobbying at all levels of government; partnerships and collaboration with other international, national and community organisations; the building of an evidence-base through research, monitoring and evaluation; and raising public awareness and thus giving voice to children. These aspects were developed, tested, adjusted and solidified over time, both purposeful and, perhaps, unplanned. The combined approaches and overarching strategies have all been important to the scaling up of activities, replication of the model in time, as well as to the sustainability of overall programming. They are exemplified in figure 3. While the projects, strategies, activities and partnerships described in the section below are presented along with these key aspects, the approaches weave throughout all projects, particularly as EvC progressed in its development as an organisation.



Figure 3: Components of the Approach

¹⁹ Country M&E Reports\Programme Reports\Quarterly Report April 2000

4. How Did the Programme Set Out to Achieve the Intended Changes in the Situation of Children?

4.1 Innovative Direct Service Models

In Hîncești, ECT assessed all the girls and made recommendations for deinstitutionalisation, as well as working to prevent new admissions. At the time these were new and innovative service models, which were virtually non-existent in Moldova prior to the assessment. In the early years, ECT focused on developing innovative approaches based solidly in modern social work and case management practice which targeted the most vulnerable families and children at risk of being placed in institutions. These approaches included a range of practical and contextualized working family-based models for children and families which enabled care in the community.

By 2000, work at the regional and national levels on legislation to enable foster care was taking place, with ECT at the forefront. The first foster care service pilot was launched in Chișinău in collaboration with the Municipal Directorate of Child Rights Protection.

It is envisioned that utilising this framework as a basis for fostering implementation, attempts will be made to create a brief statute in the City of Chisinau allowing fostering work to begin. The statute will allow ECT to implement programmes of fostering at a local level, while utilising this experience alongside the creation of new national legislation. According to the collaboration with the City of Chisinau, ECT will cover costs, until such a time as national legislation allows for the model as a viable alternative.²⁰

Building on the increasing credibility of ECT's work in Moldova, in 2003 the organisation secured a project funded by the EU Technical Assistance to the Commonwealth of Independent States (TACIS) Programme. This project allowed EvC to integrate approaches in an increasingly intensive way. The specific objectives of the TACIS "Capacity Building in Social Policy Reform" project were: to support the MoLSPF to develop models of alternative care and decrease reliance on institutional care; to support the GoM to establish a sustainable structure for the education and training of social workers and managers; and to increase public awareness of the effects of institutionalisation and effective methods of working with children at risk in the community.²¹

With the building blocks firmly in place as a strong and credible organisation, EvC continued to work on a variety of projects in several regions. In 2002 a project funded by the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) brought replication of best practices such as family support, reintegration and foster care to Ungheni, later the first region to fully take over financial responsibility for services. There were significant changes in child protection at the local level,

Service Models

Family support services to prevent institutionalisation (prevention in maternity, parent-baby units, family preservation, respite care)

Reintegration services to ensure safe, supported and professional deinstitutionalisation

Alternative family-based care or foster care

Family type group care or small group homes

Integration services for street children

Day care for children with disabilities

Inclusive education and learning plan services for children with disabilities

TACIS PROJECT IMPACTS

A system of community-based social services & dissemination of direct approaches at the local level

Assessment of residential institutions & reorganisation strategies

National legal framework improvements & regulations for gate-keeping, foster care, family support & reintegration & budget mechanism policy for family-based care

National Action Plan for Residential Care System Reform

²⁰ Quarterly Report April 2000

²¹ EvC (2006) *Capacity Building in Social Policy Reform in Moldova Draft Final Report*

which resulted in improved inter-agency cooperation, efficient case resolution, and attempts to prevent child abandonment and institutionalisation. EvC trained local administrations across the country in order to emulate these positive outcomes. Institutionalisation was increasingly seen as a last resort for the social protection of children without parental care. In 2007-2008 regulations for gate-keeping, foster care and standards for social services were approved by the GoM.

In 2007, EvC supported Cahul SAFPD in the first major effort to transform a residential institution into community-based social services to support children without parental care. The National Strategy was launched that same year by the government²² and simultaneously EvC committed to action in support of the effort. A 2010 project with UNICEF was the first initiative targeted at the deinstitutionalisation of children with learning disabilities from auxiliary schools and the development of inclusive education in public schools. The project focussed on assessment of children and the development of individual care/education plans for reintegration in families or placement into family type care.

Replication of the success of these two projects led to the 2010-2013 project, *“Protecting Children in Moldova from family separation, violence, abuse, neglect & exploitation”* funded by United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and enabling 100,000 vulnerable children increased access to quality social protection services, including systems to prevent family separation and closure of a number of residential institutions in support of the government’s strategy. By 2012 four out of five targeted institutions had been completely closed.

4.2 Work with National, Regional and Local Government Structures

From the beginning services were developed at the local level working with local government structures and aiming in order to demonstrate efficiency to the national level government. In these early years and throughout all consequent project development in many different regions of Moldova, the team worked alongside local government partners to develop social services aimed at supporting children in families and reorganising structures toward alternative family-based and child-centred services. Government partnerships became a pillar of the EvC approach.

With the support of the TACIS project, the approach of EvC evolved from action at a local level to results on national policy issues, drawing attention to the importance of addressing political, legal policy and national strategies, processes, procedures and financial mechanisms, and building the capacity of decision makers. EvC further developed its multi-level approach building on their experience, and confirmed their on-going technical approach to prevention and deinstitutionalisation, while capitalizing on the importance of working on services locally and policy nationally.

In order to reach the most influential people in the country, EvC arranged study tours for key decision makers and national level conferences, encouraged in-depth discussions and debates to change political attitudes, and emboldened reform. In the opinion of the Făleşti Raion Council, EvC’s communication strategies and national level work had a positive impact, *“Society began to understand the negative effect of institutions on children.”*²³

Between 2002 and 2006, EvC implemented a number of projects with local authorities (LAs) in raions to support and raise the capacity of the SAFPD, most of which were new structures, to prevent institutionalization, establish gatekeeping structures, and develop contextualized services such as

Moldova is divided into administrative units:
32 regions
3 municipalities
Gagauz Yery (autonomous unit)
Transnistria (territorial unit)

37 local child protection authorities exist today

²² Government Decision No 784 *National Strategy and Action Plan on the Reform of the Residential Child Care System 2007-2012*

²³ Interview with Mrs I. Banzari, Vice President, Făleşti Raion Council, with Peter Evans 05/2012

foster care, family support and reintegration. These services were subsequently fully integrated within the LA structures and budgets.

*The approach of EvC is really different because they work on the coordination of activities with the Ministry by coordinating with the policies that already exist in this country and try to fill in the gaps in the systems. What is also important is they not only work with the Ministry but also the local public authorities. There is a difference (from other NGOs). EveryChild works with the Ministry as a partner. There are many cases when the Ministry only learns about the objectives (of the projects of other NGOs) only when they start implementing them or even later at the end of the project.*²⁴

V. Dumbraveanu, Department of Child Protection, MoLSPF

4.3 Building Capacity

From 2000 to 2002 the European Commission (EC) Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO) provided two projects ECHO 1 and ECHO 2. These projects introduced an innovative strategy for Moldova that combined food aid with family support to increase the resilience of at least 1,000 vulnerable families. The award of the ECHO project implied recognition by the EC of the capacity of ECT Moldova and the importance of its work. Through this project EvC brought increasing focus to the importance of strategies aimed at building the social work capacity of local staff through training, including child/family assessment and case planning and management. These were the days of the first social workers in Moldova. The social workers for the ECHO project were recruited from the existing government structures, trained, and continued to work after the project ended. According to EvC, the project significantly contributed to the acceptance of family support services in the regions where it was implemented because of the capacity building.

The TACIS project trained over 450 specialists within the child protection system, developed and disseminated curriculum, prepared a team of national trainers in the field of social care and protection of children, and spearheaded a National Resource Centre for the dissemination of best practices. Within the *Family Support, Counselling and Reintegration Project* funded by the Department for International Development (UK) (DFID) 800 community social workers and 220 employees of the Community Social Assistance Service/Domiciliary Care Service were trained nationwide. 812 specialists, decision makers and social workers were trained within the National Foster Care and Gatekeeping Project, funded by EvC and Childhood Foundation.

The 2010-2013 USAID-supported project continued the multi-level approach which was successfully implemented from the TACIS project onward. The project worked at Ministry level in several ways: building capacity of government to define and develop relevant legislation policies and strategies to better protect vulnerable children and families; strengthening the capacity of LAs to plan and deliver child protection services; and strengthening the technical capacity of front-line social assistants to assess the needs of children and devise appropriate intervention plans.

*“They (community social workers) are no longer just putting out fires based on what they think the possibilities for putting out fires might be. They are knowing what the fires are, where they are, and what they need to put them out.”*²⁵ **Deputy Regional President for Social Issues, Falesti**

4.4 Policy Advocacy and Lobbying

The 1995 work in Hîncești also provided the departure point for planned and purposeful lobby and advocacy strategies to give voice to the needs of the country’s most vulnerable children and families. In the girl’s residential institution work on behalf of ECT eventually brought a visit by the Moldova President and led to sustainable change to this institution and the lives of its young residents.²⁶

²⁴ Bradford, NB (2012). *Mid-Term Review of the Protecting Children in Moldova from family separation, violence, abuse, neglect & exploitation*

²⁵ Ibid

²⁶ Ibid interview with Christopher Logan

The TACIS project played an instrumental role in effecting change, particularly in the attitudes of both key decision makers and the public at large. Consistent messages promoted in nationwide publicity campaigns aimed, for the first time, to change the attitude of the general public away from acceptance of the use of residential institutions. Under TACIS, EvC played an important role in development of the National Strategy & Action Plan for Reform of the Residential Institution System (2007-2012).

“It took us about two years to get to the point where the president comes forward and talks about reform. We had a communications campaign that not only targeted the general public but also politicians. We advocated four main points: the model of community social workers, the vital need for gatekeeping, the importance of family support and the critical and urgent nature of deinstitutionalisation.”²⁷ Stela Grigoras, P4EC Director

The outcomes achieved in the DFID project were also significant to the process of improving legislation including: the National Strategy on Integrated System of Social Services, the Law on Social Services, amendments to the Law on Social Assistance, and a new Law on Social Benefits. The radical change in the cash benefit system became one of the most vital elements of prevention and reintegration services, as it provided financial assistance to those families most in need and targeted the population of families with children in institutions due to economic factors. Legislation was based on decentralization of the protection system and allowed for development of new social service systems at the local level. In addition, the building of a social protection workforce through recruiting, training and technical assistance was built on the improvements and ultimately strengthened the social assistance system that resulted from policy changes at the national level.

Significant Policy

National Strategy on Integrated Systems of Social Services (2009)

Law on Integrated Social Services (2009)

Law on Social Benefits (2008)

National Strategy & Action Plan for Reform of the Residential Institution System (2007-2012)

Regulations for gate-keeping, foster care, community social work, supervision, referral and standards for social services (2007/2008)

The development of the National Strategy on Integrated System of Social Services and subsequent development of the first Law on Social Services (2009) put a great emphasis on strengthening primary social services such as preventive and early interventions, and reducing the need and demand for specialized and residential-based services. Many pieces of secondary legislation for social services have been developed on the basis of this framework law with the support of other projects, and with the support of civil society pressures and lobbying by organisations like EvC.

4.5 Partnerships and Collaboration

EvC placed an emphasis on partnerships and collaboration with civil society organisations (CSOs) through the development of relationships with other international, national and community-based grass roots organisations (CBOs) that also were working in the country to support vulnerable children and families. In turn, these partnerships led to the development of effective service. EvC recognized the value in cooperating with like-minded NGOs, sharing knowledge and lessons learned, and partnering particularly in efforts related to: the development of services at the community level; mobilizing communities to support their own children; legislative reform initiatives and national policy advocacy; and public awareness campaigns. They knew that for significant reform and transformation of the system to transpire, all of the actors needed to work together. The desired level of rapid reform of child welfare in Moldova would not have been possible without the work of many dedicated and hardworking CSO and CBO. Those partners standing with EvC in the reform of the residential care systems included, LUMOS, CCF, Speranta Center and Keystone Human Services. In 2002, EvC brought foster carers together, an initiative that led to the formation of the Chisinau Association of Foster Carers, a group that today is a crucial voice for children without parental care

²⁷ Email with Peter Evans (2012)

and those who provide for their professional care in the municipality. EvC continues to collaborate closely with this association and others. A sample collaboration/partnership chart follows:

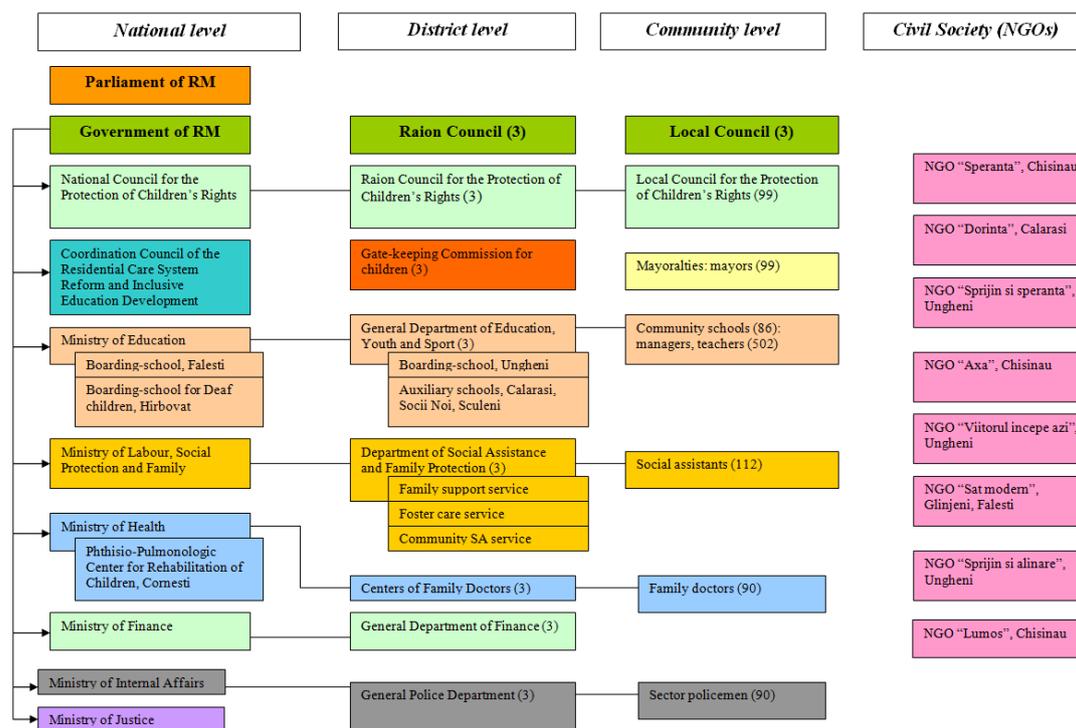


Table 2: USAID Project Partnerships & Collaborations

Since 2010, EvC has been a part of the National Coordination Council on residential care reform and development of inclusive education together with other CSOs and chaired by the MoE. Since 2009 EvC has been a member of the National Participation Council and since 2012 has been leading the Social, Educational, Youth and Health Policies Working Group within the council. This group is an advisory body of representatives of civil society, created at the initiative of the GoM to promote and facilitate stakeholder communication and participation in identifying and achieving strategic priorities in the education, health, social and youth sectors. EvC is a founding member of the National Child and Family Protection Alliance, started in 2002, a coalition of 140 CSO members. EvC has worked to strengthen the capacity of a number of organisations working with children and families.

4.6 Building of an Evidence-Base

By 2001 EvC was operating in three regions each with programmes at varying degrees of development, which included family support and reintegration projects and with a focus on expansion and replication. At the time, the vision for ECT was, to be recognized as a leading authority on issues of children and their rights. Eventually, the organisation became more mission-driven, vision focused and goal oriented. According to the EvC Annual Report 2000-2001, the Country Programme's Operational Goal was "strengthened capacity of families and communities to care for their children."²⁸

EvC 2000-2001 Strategic Objectives

- Demonstrate replicable & sustainable models of family support
- Promote replicable & sustainable models of family support
- Support the strengthening of informal family & community support structures.

²⁸ European Children's Trust Moldova Annual Report 2000-2001

With their mission, vision and goals well defined, EvC continued to build projects based on a multi-level approach, testing models of service at the local level (working closely with local governments) and advocating for the necessary supportive policy and legislation at the national level. A partnership beginning in 2007 with Oxford Policy Management (OPM), a strong international consultancy firm, allowed for the development of an evidence base that gave reliability to the pilot models. This combination allowed for best practices to be identified, adapted and replicated in new sites or for new populations of children and families. It was also influential in demonstrating to the GoM that the best practice models were those that had positive outcomes for children.

The OPM partnership project, *“Support in the delivery of efficient and sustainable social assistance”* aimed to achieve sustainable economic social assistance services for poverty reduction, while building the capacity of local government administrations to respond to the social care needs of vulnerable children and families. The project began the building of a credible evidence base for family support and deinstitutionalisation. MoLSPF with support of EvC and OPM launched the reform of the social assistance system. The key elements of the reform were the review, development and implementation of research-based government policies that would increase the efficiency of social assistance. Cross-cutting themes of the project included support to central administrative processes, the strengthening of monitoring and evaluation, the implementation of participatory approaches which included a vulnerability assessment with beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries of social assistance services, and the establishment of new mechanisms of donor coordination and dialogue, with the intention of moving towards a sector wide approach for social protection. The Cash Benefits system was changed and is now focussed on offering support to the people in most need, especially families with children. This system of integrated social services has been replicated nationwide, in part with the support of the evidence based developed through this project.

EvC’s on-going commitment to building the base of evidence in support of family care is the *Longitudinal Research into Children’s Reintegration in Moldova*, which examines the reintegration process in four phases over approximately 18 months for children deinstitutionalized in 2011 and 2012. This effort shows P4EC and EvC-UK unwavering commitment to continuing to develop and share the evidence from best practices in care for children. The overall project objectives are to identify successful elements in strategies to ensure the sustainable reintegration of children without parental care, and to provide important information globally on what is working in deinstitutionalisation.

4.7 Raising Public Awareness and Giving Voice to Children

The TACIS project brought opportunity for significant public awareness and political opinion work including films, training of media, and the national campaign *“Call the Future Home*. This was the first campaign in the country that highlighted the issues of institutionalised children and the need and right of the child to grow up in a family. The campaign was carried out over two years without interruption. The DFID and USAID projects allowed EvC to build on this experience and develop national campaigns focusing attention on transformation of residential care, development of community based family support and alternative care services, and inclusive education. Other sections of this report have highlighted how the public attitudes began to shift away from acceptance of residential care as a viable option for children without parental care. Of course, there is still work to be done in this area.

“It is not a question of is the mentality around institutionalizing children changing? Rather it is the fact that it has clearly changed. There is no going back now.”²⁹ Deputy Regional President for Social Issues, Faleti

²⁹ Ibid Bradford, NB

The National Strategy clearly outlined central and local government roles, as well as those of NGOs however it did not explicitly express the roles and responsibilities of children or their families. From the beginning of its deinstitutionalisation programme EvC has consistently promoted, advocated for and worked to improve their own efforts to ensure that children's voices are heard and that the family's function as the primary and best caregiver for children is maintained. EvC has a strong tradition of supporting children to claim their rights and have their voices heard.

In 2006, at the TACIS final conference, the first children's conference ran in parallel and children voiced their rights in front of key decision makers. The 2010 project with UNICEF stressed the importance of participation of children in decision making processes, particularly those being deinstitutionalized from auxiliary schools for children with special needs. The Advisory Boards of Children (ABC) have been developed and supported to work with LA's to ensure that children have the opportunity to be heard and participate in monitoring of children's services. At a final conference of the EU project "Development of Respite Foster Care" in 2012, more than thirty children in foster care attended, actively participating in the event, including reporting to the high level decision makers on their recommendations for further development of foster care models as alternatives to institutionalization. EvC's commitment to maintaining highly trained and experienced Child and Youth Specialists helps to enable the continuing participation of children in its programmes.

With the approval of the National Strategy while all other state and civil society actors had taken a pause and stood aside, waiting for further unfolding of the situation, EvC proved again its persistence and consistency by starting the project in Cahul "Reorganisation of the Residential Institution" working on giving life to all that we had aspired to over the years: reintegration of children into families and alternative services, the integration of children in community schools, the reallocation of funds from the education system to social assistance system, offering children the opportunity to speak up and involve into the transformation of the institution, and creation of better services for them. Stela Grigoras, P4EC Director³⁰

In 1995, the EvC programme set out to improve the lives of Moldova's children, particularly those living in institutions. The accomplishments, with full recognition to the effort of the partners including government and non-government, have been tremendous. The approaches that were developed evolved into an expressed theory of change over time. The following section explores further lessons of theory, sustainability and best practices gained from ten years of the deinstitutionalisation programme.

5. What Significant Learning Points Can Be Identified from the Programme About How Change Happens?

5.1 Summary of Lessons Learnt

A summary of the lessons learned from the deinstitutionalisation programme are:

1. Throughout the lifetime of the programme the strategic focus has been on strengthening systems to better respond to vulnerable children and families. EvC has consistently focussed on strengthening systems and capacities of duty bearers to protect children.

Accomplishments

Over **13,000** children and their families have been served

1,200 social workers have been trained

Nearly **4,000** children have been directly prevented from entering institutions

Over **2,600** children have been deinstitutionalised

Countless other people have benefitted from capacity building.

Every region has a functioning local public authority on child protection.

³⁰ email 09/07/2012

2. It has taken many years of patient and consistent lobbying and advocacy for the GoM to reach the point where it is committed fully to closing institutions. The reform has reached a “tipping point”, however the change that began in 1994 and is still not complete 18 years later. It has been and continues to be a “long-haul process”.
3. The programme began with small scale projects demonstrating what worked and served as the foundation for building the credibility of EvC and other NGOs. Successful projects, the need for a strategic approach, and allowable funding, enabled EvC to adopt the multi-layered, multi-dimension approach. That method involved; addressing primary and secondary legislation, central government policies and strategies, processes and procedures that led to reforms focusing on the whole child protection system; and building capacity, technical knowledge and skills of front-line staff to case manage prevention and deinstitutionalisation, and last but not least, it addressed alternative services that support children in families. The multi-layered approach continues.
4. Significant external funding-raising by EvC was critical to the effectiveness of the programme. NGOs and partnerships with civil society have been vital to the development of the models, as has foreign assistance. These partnerships and support mechanisms remain important to the continued reform process.
5. Theories of Change and strategic planning and intervention have all had their important place in the evolution of the Moldova deinstitutionalisation programme, but the personal and professional qualities and unswerving will of its managers and staff have been vital to change. People interviewed for the report have used words such as ‘brave’, ‘courageous’ and ‘persistent’ to describe the actions of EvC in Moldova. They continue to hold steadfast to a vision where every child grows up in a family.
6. The “story” of deinstitutionalisation in the target regions of focus for EvC is being captured through rich and deep data collection, and reflects the pride that local authorities and their partners are beginning to feel in their efforts. Continuing to document this story will aid the replication of models in other regions where there has been less emphasis and a more limited impact of the reform process.

5.2 Theory of Change and Assumptions

A “Theory of Change” defines the building blocks necessary to produce an ultimate desired impact: in this case the care of children in families. The expressed outcomes, results, accomplishments, or preconditions are framed through a pathway of change or causal framework that outlines the change process. It can demonstrate the complexity of interventions and activities required to effect social change and develop common vision. An articulated theory of change requires clarity not only about vision, but on goals, indicators of success and the creation of agreement on actions.³¹

The theory of change was perhaps not explicitly delineated when ECT first moved into Moldova in 1994. Then the view was that vulnerable children and families were not protected by the fragmented divisions of either national or municipal child protection responsibilities inherited from Soviet times, however additionally The Trust believed an emphasis on systems reform would best help central and local authorities to protect children in the long term. Early on, and building on their experience from Romania, EvC believed there had to be better approaches, more systemic approaches to improve the lives of children, particularly those without parental care, other than delivering humanitarian aid to under-resourced, under-staffed and ill-equipped residential institutions. Focus was on building the capacity of Chişinău Municipality to better protect children and families. This provided the later momentum to address nationwide issues from a dual approach, both local (through direct services) and nationally (through policy advocacy). The Chişinău

³¹ Adapted from www.theoryofchange.org

Municipality, and their willingness, provided a foundation upon which to test structural reform and introduce modern social work practices including assessment, case planning and case management. Whether EvC was explicitly testing a theory of change approach at that time might be debatable, but regardless, it steered the development of the theory and strategies later articulated.

The TACIS project provided the opportunity to be more purposeful in communicating a theory of change in a planful manner (see Annex D & F). It identified the necessary building blocks and layers of influence necessary to impacting a system towards “Every Child Growing up in a Family.” This involved primary and secondary legislation in support of children in families, government financial policies in support of children in families, gatekeeping structures to prevent removal of children from families and institutionalization, and a range of locally-based services to support families. Preconditions expressed in the theory included several layers from national government and local authorities to social service professionals/paraprofessionals, to community and civil society. Interventions became purposeful with a clearly identified goal, key principles, targeted outcomes and means for monitoring and testing, which aligned with the theory of change.

The theory of change at that point was about linking practice development at local levels (the development of services and assessment of institutions and deinstitutionalisation) with policy development at national levels; cost-benefit analysis, residential reform strategic planning, human resource development to support the reform; and fortifying the communication and advocacy efforts to prepare the ground for change. In doing so, children, families and professionals were supported to take part in making change at local level, and thus influencing change at the national level. This became the base for causal frameworks and theories expressed in later projects as well. Similarly, with the core theory of change as its base, the USAID framework (see Annex E) also added the importance of child participation, integration with the larger protection systems, school integration, and education.

Interestingly the TACIS theory was originally developed as a means to show GoM the project’s strategic framework, not necessarily as an expression of the organisation’s theory about factors of change necessary for the reform of the country’s child protection system. The illustration proved to be an important visual means to keep reform in front of the eyes of decision makers.

A significant outcome of the TACIS Project, and as EvC moved forward from there, was the organisation’s desire to become more strategic and process-focused in their work. The EvC Social Change Theory, the underpinning of all projects, and the TACIS goals and principles are shown on the following page. TACIS produced the first opportunity to step back and review the pathway of change that was steering the significant efforts in Moldova. At that time, while it may not have been implicit in the thinking, the process resulted both in a more goal-oriented and vision-driven organisational framework, as well as an ability to strategically implement all future work with a clear theory of change model in mind. EvC was dedicated to improving upon the theory of change and latter added the importance of including the voice of children and their families as an vital layer of influence. The revised theory that included the interacting layers of influence was explicitly laid out in projects and interventions from the TACIS project onward. Examples are provided in the annexes to this report. Over the lifetime of EvC’s development of the deinstitutionalisation programme the theory of change evolved, however its core never changed.

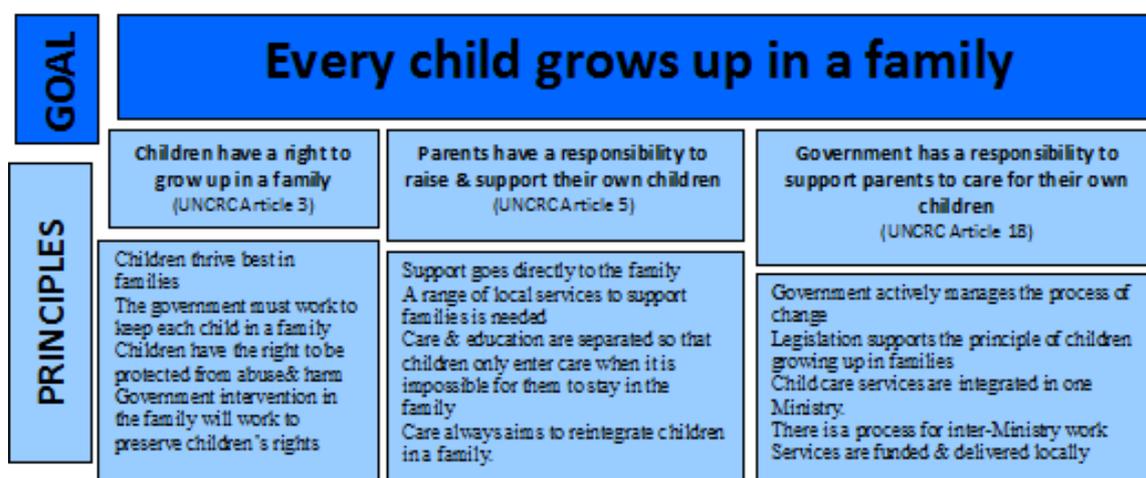


Figure 4: TACIS Goals & Principles

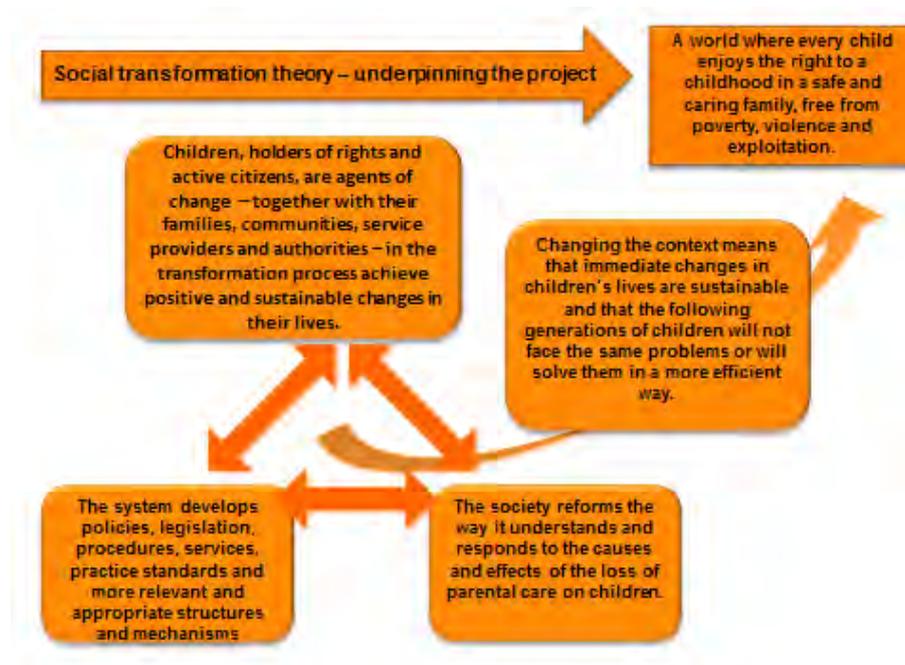


Figure 5: EvC Social Transformation Theory

A Theory of Change necessitates thoughtful articulation of the assumptions used in developing the change framework and process. Assumptions help to explain the connections between outcome levels, the expectations about the impact of interventions, and the potential risks or threats to success.³² If any assumptions were made early in EvC's work in Moldova they were that the authorities, at least in Chişinău were ready to listen, ready to change their opinions and ways of working, and ready to work with civil society. Further projects identified and addressed assumptions and potential constraints that likely had also been the underpinnings of previous work, however not expressed, including: political instability and lack of political will, severe economic conditions and poverty, and persistent public attitudes around the State's responsibility to care for children. Major assumptions included:

³² Ibid

- That civil society and public attitudes and behaviors would change significantly enough to drive change from the bottom up.
- That families, equipped with economic resources, information and support services, would be willing and able to care for children exiting institutions, as well as commit to preventing their children from entering in the first place.
- That the GoM was and remained committed to a similar vision – and that this would lead to improved legislation and standards, decentralization of responsibility, and be translated into quality services developed, implemented, and paid for at the local level.
- That gatekeeping structures and protocols would function sufficiently to keep children from entering institutions.

The EveryChild Theory of Change

A long-term impact of **enabling every child to grow up in a family** requires a variety of approaches or strategic interventions at a number of different points and levels in the child protection system, all the way from the child and family to the policy level; and including not only the development of a continuum of family- and community-based and child-focused services and professional capacity, but also a policy framework, dedicated resources, coordinated partnerships, public and civil society working together, a shifting public attitude, and the opportunity for children and families to have a voice.

5.3 Best Practices in Deinstitutionalisation

From a best practice perspective there were a number of approaches that were effective, efficient, sustainable, and replicable. Change at a systems reform level happens as a result of the multitude of interacting factors – reform cannot happen without policy changes; the lives of children could not have been directly impacted without increased capacity of professionals and the development of service models. What was unique about EvC is that they succeeded in impacting the system and creating change at all of these levels. There is an observable differences in the approach adopted as compared to most other NGOs active in Moldova. Some NGOs operate only at the local level (CSO & CBO); some focus on a specific approach or model for a particular target group of children and/or families; others are focused as service providers. EvC was able to recognize that it takes all pieces of the puzzle to complete the whole. Reform requires a range of actors working together, benefitting from and capitalizing on each other’s experiences. The reform in Moldova has most definitely been a significant effort by many different actors of equal importance. Certainly for EvC the theory of change developed and tested has inspired and guided the work in many other countries throughout the region and the world. The theory and its varying strategic interventions and approaches have essentially been, as a whole, the best practice in deinstitutionalisation.

PIECES OF THE PUZZLE

- Innovative Direct Services
- Work with Government
- Building Capacity
- Policy Advocacy & Lobbying
- Partnerships & Collaboration
- Building Evidence Bases
- Raising Public Awareness
- Giving Voice to Children & Families

Best Practice Models:

- Reorganisation and transformation of residential centres, including auxiliary schools for children with disabilities, through deinstitutionalisation and development of community-based services.
- Services for Children Without Adequate Family Care and those at-risk of Separation from Families – Supported Family Reintegration, Family Support / Family Preservation, Foster Care, Parent-Baby Units, Small Family-Type Group Homes
- Community Social Work – case management and supervision models, referral mechanisms, training curricula, working methodology, etc.
- Gatekeeping Commissions: multi-disciplinary groups tasked with decision making and support in cases of risk, preventing institutionalization, and referral of families and children to services
- ABC Children’s Groups and Association of Foster Carers

5.4 Sustainability

Also of significant importance is the way in which the organisation developed in unison with the system. It is important to note that the multi-pronged approach would not have been possible without a strong organisation with certain qualities firmly in place. EvC was and is a mission and vision driven organisation that is able to define and focus on goals and results. As a learning organisation they were able to incorporate lessons along the way and adapt as the context and needs changed. In the words of the director of P4EC, “When you mix practice with policy, you must be creative and every time you are challenging what you have created”.



Figure 6: Factors in Replication & Sustainability

As an organization, EvC is: mission and vision driven, goal oriented and results focused, committed to the multi-level approach, and dedicated to learning as an organisation. These key factors supported sustainability. The changes in the protection and care of children in Moldova can be considered fully sustainable, even with many areas of continued need and further development. It will move forward and overcome the constraints of economic difficulty and struggle that the country and most families face on a daily basis. There have been significant changes in the attitudes and mentalities of partners supported through the holistic approach of capacity building a combination of practical and theoretical support as well as acting as an advocate at national level. These will endure. This capacity will always be there.

“The NGO projects have illuminated our work mainly through the training programmes. The fact that decision makers are also trained makes it so that we have a receptive and innovative regional commission. We can experiment openly with new services and ideas. This is a major reflection on the sustainability of project activities.”³³ Social Work Department Head, Falesti

According to the USAID mid-term project review, there have been significant changes in attitudes and mentalities. This has been supported through the holistic capacity building approach and the combination of practical and theoretical support, as well as through EveryChild acting as an

³³ Ibid Bradford

important advocate at the national level. Regions and local authorities feel that their “voices” are represented at the national level.³⁴

Families, children, care providers, social workers and communities have been empowered, given voice, and show increased understanding of their role in caring for children. The programme enabled children living in institutions or at risk of being placed in an institution, to grow up in families, and addressed many fundamental power inequalities, such as children denied their right to grow up in a family, to participate in decisions affecting them, to protection from abuse and exploitation, and to health and education. This has begun to change and the momentum is expected to continue.

There has been a change in the context within which child protection in Moldova is considered. When ECT Moldova first began its programme, ‘social work’ and ‘family support’ were novel and unfamiliar concepts. ‘Deinstitutionalisation’ was said by EvC to be unmentionable. But by 2003 family support and prevention were more familiar ideas and by 2007 the context had changed so significantly that an overall objective of the National Strategy was to reduce the number of children living in institutions by 50% by 2012; a goal that has been achieved.

“We have come this far. We have come with you to this half way point. We need to, we will, see it through to the end. Children are our future. Families secure the future of children.”³⁵

Deputy Director for Education, Calarasi

6. What Are the Recommendations for Future Practice in Moldova?³⁶

6.1 Recommendations for P4EC and NGO Partners in Moldova

- Continue to advocate at the national level, educating stakeholders, sharing the story of deinstitutionalisation and prevention models, and giving voice to those working at the community level, and the children and families both directly and indirectly impacted.
- If GoM adopts the necessary regulations and procedures to contract with NGOs for the supply of child protection services consider supporting NGOs in making the most of this opportunity. Private provision of services often drives increases in quality and development of additional models to fill in gaps. This could include, specialized services for children with disabilities, private foster care providers, family support and other prevention services, etc.
- P4EC is clearly excited by the prospect of opportunities to grow and diversify the organisation. There are many considerations for future directions. P4EC recognises it is essential to maintain links with the international experience of deinstitutionalisation and development of alternative care through membership of the Family for Every Child Alliance. Within this framework the lessons from Moldova should be shared more widely on the international stage.
- The GoM is currently elaborating a new and wider national strategy for the protection of children and families, not just for reform of the residential childcare system. EvC and NGO partners will want to ensure that continued action to deinstitutionalise children is a strong part of the new strategy.

³⁴ Ibid Bradford

³⁵ Ibid

³⁶ Recommendations are in large part credited to the work of Peter Evans in his case study research and resulting report & recommendations

- The current child care reforms are not irreversible. EvC and partners must continue to work together to advocate for deinstitutionalisation, family support, and inclusive education, for which the reform is well underway with impressive momentum.
- Continue investments in community social workers, other professionals and community-level social services: assess and plan for future training and on-going capacity needs including supervision training, training on family support service regulations/standards, etc. Provide support to build capacity for monitoring and evaluation.
- As the new strategy (2013-2020) is unveiled work to maintain momentum by facilitating collaboration and partnership, advocating for secondary legislative measures and minimum standards, sharing best practices, etc.
- Continue with promotion activities, public education and awareness campaigns and involve stakeholders, including children and families, in the development of these campaigns to ensure they reflect regional and local realities, issues and cultural nuances.
- The ABC young people are able, ready and willing to contribute to a better future for children in their communities and Moldova as a whole. It would be a great loss if the collective knowledge and experience of Board members were forgotten when they move on to adulthood without passing that knowledge and experience to the next generation. Plan thoughtfully and purposefully for the on-going development and support of these groups

6.2 Recommendations for the Government of Moldova

- The Ministry of Education is widely expected to continue the process of deinstitutionalisation in another tranche of institutions under its control. It is essential that all Ministries responsible for residential institutions work with NGOs and local government administrations to adopt a similar systems approach to deinstitutionalisation of children from their institutions.
- Experience has shown the technical expertise of NGOs partnered with central and local government has played a major role in child care reforms in Moldova. If donor funding to NGOs to implement reform action is diverted elsewhere, reforms risk slowing or stopping altogether at this critical point. The Government of Moldova has the responsibility to ensure the protection of vulnerable children and must step in to fill the funding gaps, ensure proper budget mechanisms and systems for the allocation of resources at the local level.
- The Law on Social Services explicitly allows for local and central government to contract out social services to non-state actors, including NGOs. It has taken five years for the Government of Moldova to adopt and approve secondary legislation to transfer financial savings arising from the reduction of numbers of children living in institutions to fund alternative services provided by local administrations. It would be unhelpful if it took as long to adopt and approve secondary legislation to the Law on Social Services to contract the supply of child protection services from NGOs. It is in the interests of Government and NGOs to work together to ensure the speedy approval of legislation and associated action to enable central and local government administrations to contract the supply of child protection services from NGOs.
- Associated with the supply of contracted child protection services by NGOs must be government policies and procedures for the accreditation and inspection of service suppliers. It is in the interests of both Government and NGOs that accreditation and inspection are implemented as they are key devices to ensure quality standards for services used by vulnerable children and families. It is hoped that policies and procedures for accreditation and inspection would be discussed and agreed upon by Government and NGOs working together.
- The number of active foster carers in Moldova is surprisingly small relative to the number of children in institutions. UNICEF has issued a call for experts to review to situation of foster care in

Moldova with the aim of finding out why this is the situation. Foster carers consulted in the research for this report were of the opinion that payments made to foster carers were so low as not to cover the cost of caring for a fostered child. Foster carers who were consulted said the low payments did not incentivise families to come forward to be foster carers and did not encourage existing foster carers to continue to care for children when other opportunities presented themselves. Ordinary families should not be expected to subsidise the cost of caring for children who are the ultimate responsibility of the State, especially when the cost of caring for that child in an institution is considerably more than the payments made to foster carers. Consideration should be given to setting minimum levels of foster carer payment centrally but permit local government administrations to supplement these rates as necessary to the context.

6.3 Joint Recommendations

Continue work towards planning and managing the deinstitutionalisation of children still living in institutions – the work is not complete.

Major achievements have been made towards reducing the number of children living in institutions in Moldova, but there is still much work to be done. More than 4,000 children continue to live in institutions. With the successes let us not lose sight of these on-going needs. To date, the majority of children who have been deinstitutionalised from institutions have been children in the general boarding schools (of which there are still 11). Far fewer children have been deinstitutionalised from baby homes (282 children are still institutionalized), auxiliary schools (there are 21 with approximately 1,800 children) and institutions for children with disabilities (230 children) and health issues (over 800 children), though there have been excellent examples of initiatives to prevent new placements in those institutions. The intention of the Government to develop a new strategy for child and family protection presents an opportunity to plan the deinstitutionalisation of all children remaining in institutions.

Progress to date has demonstrated the importance of a systems approach to deinstitutionalisation. A multi-level approach that requires more or less simultaneous action to reform:

- Primary and secondary legislation
- Government policies and strategies
- Strengthening management structures at central and local government levels
- Building robust gatekeeping processes at local level to ensure only children who cannot be supported in families are placed in institutions
- Supporting local government administrations to develop early intervention and family support services. It is particularly important that local and central government invest in energy and finance in adapting mainstream schools to provide Inclusive Education to children who otherwise would be placed in auxiliary boarding schools or institutions for children with disabilities.
- Building the capacity of front-line staff to assess the needs of individual children and support them in families
- Strengthening information management systems to monitor implementation of government policy and priorities.

Continue the partnership between Government, NGOs and major donors.

It is encouraging that the major donors have maintained an interest in childcare reforms in Moldova for as long as they have. This suggests donors have confidence that their support will result in positive changes in the lives of children. It is recommended that Government and NGOs continue to encourage donor activity in Moldova by maintaining open and constructive communications with donors to ensure their priorities are recognised.

Advocate strongly for policies and procedures that further clarify budget mechanisms and direct resources, as well as allow the contracting of child protection services.

Much of the funding to date for NGOs to support deinstitutionalisation reforms has come from private foundations and international government agencies. Those funding sources may be diverted elsewhere in the world as other humanitarian and political priorities emerge. The Government of Moldova and NGOs should plan for that eventuality sooner rather than later. Ultimately it is the responsibility of the government to ensure the protection of vulnerable children. This includes the funding of prevention, deinstitutionalisation and alternative care services provided by local government administrations.

Advocate for, enable, and promote foster care and the development of a range of foster care services.

According to the Foster Care Regulations (2007) local authorities can develop four types of placement: short term, long term, emergency and short break. To date not all have been fully developed, and a single type or style of foster care will not be suitable for all children in need of alternative care. International experience shows that a range of foster services are required, many are still lacking in Moldova:

- Short-break foster carers for children with disabilities who share the care of the child with the parents of the child. EvC has recently piloted this with support from the EU.
- Emergency short-term foster carers to care for babies and young children until longer term plans are agreed for their future.
- Emergency foster carers for older children while plans are made for them to return home or move to a longer term family.
- Longer term foster carers for children with disabilities.
- Foster care for children involved with the juvenile justice system.

The relatively few foster carers in Moldova suggest foster care is not seen either by the general public nor government as a viable and realistic alternative to placement in an institution. If foster care was given a higher profile in the public's consciousness through action to build its image, perhaps more families would come forward.

Recognize the gaps in services at the local level, and advocate for and enable the development of a full range of services that address the varying needs.

There is a strong need to continue efforts to get services and resources to the community level. Stakeholders express the need for services for children with special needs, comprehensive family support services aimed at preventing family breakdown, home-based services, services for children with disabilities, etc. Currently many services are concentrated at the regional level. Planning needs to be reflective of gaps identified and incorporate methods for helping local authorities plan, design, resource and implement new services to fill those gaps.

Likewise, continued effort is strongly needed to secure the allocation of budget funds for local services. As the system moves away from institutional care the funds need to be reallocated, essentially following the child. There are on-going challenges with the framework for ensuring that this happens. The regional and local levels are concerned they have limited resources to provide the necessary services.

Develop coordinated plans for the deinstitutionalisation of children living in baby homes, children with disabilities, and children living in health facilities

To date the greater proportion of children who have been deinstitutionalised and returned to live with their families have come from institutions under the MoE. A greater challenge will be the deinstitutionalisation of children living in baby houses, children with disabilities, and children living in special health facilities like that for hearing impaired or tuberculosis that come under the MoH. Deinstitutionalisation will be achieved by a combination of political will, assessment and case planning for children already living in those institutions, and ensuring a safety net of services is in place for safe, supported, and managed return to families.

The development of services to support children with disabilities in families will be especially challenging, but those children have the same rights to grow up in a family, and access education and health services as other children. Local government administrations will want to continue to draw on the technical expertise of NGOs to assess the needs of individual children with disabilities, infants and young children, and children with health issues, to develop individual plans and service development strategies to meet those needs.

7. Implications for Global Practice

It is hoped that this report in its entirety will provide lessons for global practice as Governments, non-governmental organizations, coalitions, and communities in their work to ensure that all children are guaranteed their rights under the United Nation's Convention on the Rights of the Child, particularly the right of every child to a family. EveryChild believes that the lessons learned through the development of its deinstitutionalisation programme in Moldova can provide insight, inspiration and practical approaches to improve the lives of children without adequate parental care across the globe, especially in smaller countries with similar issues.

The experience of EveryChild in Moldova has clearly shown that it "takes a village to raise a child." Reform of the detrimental residential care systems, still so widely in place around the world, requires the will of Governments from the national to the local level; new and comprehensive structures and policies; and coordinated and appropriately allocated donor and government resources. Institutions have serious negative and long-term impacts on the health, growth and development of children. We must understand these impacts and strive to prevent children from entering residential placement, while committing to safely deinstitutionalising those already in care.

The implications for global practice include:

- Demonstrated evidence-based models of deinstitutionalisation, case management, gatekeeping, alternative care, early intervention, prevention and family support must ensure that children are safe and protected, and that families have the support needed to raise their children. Organisations and governments need to continue to develop, pilot and demonstrate these types of models.
- Information on successful, as well as less successful, models of deinstitutionalisation and alternative care should be shared widely so that people can learn from the experiences of others. Organizations and governments, alike, need share their learning with others.
- Advocacy and awareness must focus on shifting public attitudes, pressing government for changes, and raising the voices of children. Organisations are encouraged to come together with others to form stronger and louder voices in advocacy and awareness efforts. Advocacy and awareness should be directed to the global or international stage, nationally in each country, and at the very local or community level.
- Training and capacity building needs to focus on building workforces that can respond with safe, nurturing and family-based care grounded in modern social work practice.

- Reform requires the collaboration of all actors towards a common vision. NGOs and groups of people must work together, forming partnerships, associations and coalitions that can form shared vision and speak with common voice.
- Change must involve the communities that surround families as they work to raise healthy and productive citizens, investing in the welfare of all children and working to prevent them from being separated from their families.
- All actors should keep *the best interest of the child* at the forefront of planning and implementation of all interventions, considering the principles of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the UN Guidelines on Alternative Care.
- The work must include the empowerment of children and their families, carers, community members to be active participants in the processes, decisions and dialogues that impact on them, including deinstitutionalisation.

Together we must all do better for children, all children, every child!

Resources on deinstitutionalisation, research on the effects of institutions on children, and information on alternative care are increasingly available:

For full and summary versions of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (available also in several languages) visit www.unicef.org/crc/

The UN Guidelines for Alternative Care of Children, available in several languages and in child and family-friendly versions, can be found at www.crin.org/bcn/initiatives.asp

The NGO Working Group on Children without Parental Care is at www.childrightsnet.org

The Child Rights Information Network (CRIN) and Better Care Network (BCN) make a wide range of information and resources available at www.crin.org and www.crin.org/bcn/

EveryChild and partners share experiences and make resources available at www.everychild.org.uk

Partnerships for Every Child and the work in Moldova is posted at www.p4ec.md

The global network “Family for Every Child” makes resources, information, research, toolkits, etc. available at www.familyforeverychild.org

Annex A: Table of Projects and Programs 1995-2012

Project	Period	Location	Partners	Donor	Outcome
Exchange of Best Practices – Chisinau / Italy	1995 - 1997	Chisinau		EU Overture	Child Protection Directorate in Chisinau established
Nutritional Support & Volunteering	1997 - 2000	Hincesti	Boarding School for girls with severe disabilities	ECT	Group of volunteers developed Raising public awareness – National & International
Family Support Project Reintegration Project Group Home Project Foster Care Project	1998 - 2004	Chisinau	Chisinau Child Protection Directorate Chisinau City Hall	ECT	Services incorporated into LA structure & funded by the Directorate for Child Protection
Family Support Project Reintegration Project Foster Care Project Day Care Center	1999-2004	Cahul Raion	Cahul Raion Council Cahul Child Protection Directorate UNICEF Moldova	ECT Canadian Embassy	Services incorporated into LA structure & funded by Raion Council
Family Support Project Reintegration Project Foster Care Center Family Counseling Center	1999-2010	Tiraspol, Transnistria	Tiraspol City Administration Family for Children Fund (NGO)	ECT & EvC DFID Communication Workers Union Humanitarian Aid (CWUHA) SADC	Centre for family Counseling established in Tiraspol Family Support, Reintegration & Family Counseling
Nutrition Aid to Children and Families	1999-2000	Chisinau, Cahul, Tiraspol	LA UNICEF	ECHO, EU	Social work capacity building Development of social work support to families
Strengthening the capacity of families	2001-2002	Chisinau Cahul	LA	EU - ECHO	Strengthened family support services Developed database used by LA
Sharing of Information and Regional Networking	2001-2003	Chisinau	Chisinau Directorate for Child Protection	DFID - HSCP British Embassy	International conference, round tables and seminars Published materials on LA reorganization & family-friendly child-centred services Facilitated system reforms Promoted sharing of information & lessons nationwide Public awareness Developed the capacity of local groups of parents as advocates Established national foster care association
Development of social services for children and families at risk	2002-2004	Ungheni	Ungheni Raion Council	UNICEF	Established national level models of alternative services Decentralized services to LA level (family support, reintegration and foster care)
Capacity building in Social Policy Reform	2004-2006	Republic of Moldova	MoLSP, MoH, MoEd	EU - TACIS	Legal framework for child and family protection Code of practice & guidance for professionals Financial mechanisms for alternative practice Range of responses needs of institutionalised children & children at risk State monitoring system developed and implemented. MoLSP & LAs increased capacity – training, curricula Social worker, NGOs & parents trained National training & resource system/centre Public awareness campaign Framework for NGOs as local service providers

Development of integrated social services for children and families	2006 - 2009	Soroca Raion	Soroca local public authorities, MoLSP	EvC	LA capacity increased for sustainable community-based social services Mechanisms to prevent child's separation Gate Keeping system Foster Care, Family Support and Reintegration services developed Integrated into the LA system
Prevention of child abandonment at birth Extension	2006 – 2009 2007 - 2009	Ungheni Raion Ungheni & Chisinau	Ungheni LA MoLSPF Chisinau Republican Maternity and Ungheni Children's Hospital Chisinau LA	World Childhood Foundation Anonymous	LA capacity increased Prevention of Child Abandonment at Birth Service Early child abandonment prevented Preservation of the family model Foster care service for parents and babies together Short-term social supports for mothers Capacity building of medical staff & specialists LA Services incorporated in LA Qualitative study to identify the causes of child abandonment at birth & interventions Advocacy based on research
Prevention of child abandonment at birth in the Chisinau Republican Maternity	2006 - 2008	Chisinau	Chisinau Republican Maternity and Ungheni Children's Hospital Chisinau LA	Andreas A David Foundation	Service to prevent child abandonment at birth Community residential service to support mother and baby Strengthening community support for mothers and babies Increased capacity maternity staff & LA Multidisciplinary group at maternity Health care, benefits, vocational training LA facilitating access to these services
Support in the delivery of efficient and sustainable social assistance	2007 - 2010	Republic of Moldova	MoLSPF Oxford Policy Management	DFID SIDA	Delivery of effective & sustainable social assistance services to reduce poverty & protect vulnerable groups Reform of the cash benefits system Reform of social care services Development of a means-tested benefits system - legislative & administrative reform Elaboration of an integrated strategy at a community level for reduced residential care Improved efficiency of service provision National Development Strategy Decentralisation of service delivery Strengthening of M&E - participatory approaches, vulnerability assessment Donor coordination and dialogue
Reorganisation of the Cahul residential school and Support of Care Givers	2007 – 2011	Cahul Raion	Cahul LA MoLSPF MoE	Andreas A David Foundation Anonymous donor	Reorganize institution into community based social services Support LAs in developing community based social services Reintegration in biological families Alternative family environments Consolidate community support for prevention of child institutionalization Establishment of social apartments for children of aging out of institutions Integrating children in mainstream schools Life skills program development Vocational education Capacity building on youth independence
National Foster Care and Gate - Keeping	2009 - 2012	Republic of Moldova	32 LA's	EvC World Childhood Foundation	32 regions with capacities to develop and provide high quality foster care services to children without parental care. Methodological guides for the development of Foster Care, gate-keeping, family support and reintegration

					<p>Training Curricula for foster care & Gate Keeping</p> <p>Informational meetings with decision makers</p> <p>Training of LPA in foster care, gate-keeping, family support and reintegration.</p> <p>M&E Development - monitoring system and use the data at local level</p>
Children from the Moldova are protected from separation, abuse, violence and neglect	2010 - 2013	Falesti Raion Ungheni Raion	MoEd Falesti & Ungheni LAs	UNICEF	<p>Strengthened social protection system for vulnerable children and their families</p> <p>Provision of quality social services</p> <p>Support the Masterplan of Transformation Closure of three auxiliary schools through development of community based services</p>
Protecting Children in Moldova from family separation, violence, abuse, neglect & exploitation	2010 – 2013	Republic of Moldova Falesti, Ungheni & Orhei Raion	MoLSPF Raion LAs	USAID	<p>Increased national commitment to support UN guidelines on alternative care</p> <p>Children and families with improved access to family support and family substitute services</p> <p>Specialists with increased capacity to prevent family separation and provide protection to children without parental care</p> <p>Local authorities prioritize child participation in local child welfare policies</p> <p>Professional and public attitudes towards supporting vulnerable families and children to prevent separation and use of family based care as opposed to residential care for children without parental care.</p>
Developing Short Break Foster Care Services for Children with Disabilities	2011 - 2012	Republic of Moldova Chisinau &		EU - EIDHR	<p>Increased capacity of service providers to ensure the rights of children with disabilities to quality family-based care.</p> <p>Professional and public attitudes supporting children with disabilities and their families to prevent family separation using short-term substitute family based care as opposed to residential care for children with disabilities.</p> <p>National authorities the implementation of models of short break foster care for children with disabilities and promote this practice for nationwide replication</p>

15 th June 2012	Stela Grigoras Daniela Mamaliga Viorica Postolaki	Partnerships for Every Child Director Partnerships for Every Child Programmes Director HR & Development Manager Partnerships for Every Child
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Annex C: Referenced & Reviewed Document List

External Documents

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GOAL

Every child grows up in a family

PRINCIPLES

Children have a right to grow up in a family

(UNCRC Article 3)

Children thrive best in families and the government will do all it can to keep each child in a family.

However children have the right to be protected from abuse and harm.

Government intervention in the family will be the minimum necessary to preserve children's rights.

Parents have a responsibility to raise and support their own children

(UNCRC Article 5)

Support – whether financial or psycho-social – goes directly to the family.

There is a range of local services to support families at times of difficulty.

Care and education are separated so that children only enter institutional care when it is impossible for them to stay in a family.

Institutional care always aims to reintegrate children in a family.

Support going directly to the family
Separate care and education.

Support for re-integration of children from institutions.
Assessment of all children in institutions.

Government has a responsibility to support parents to care for their own children

(UNCRC Article 18)

The Government actively manages the process of change.

Legislation supports the principle of children growing up in their own families.

Child care services are integrated in one Ministry.

There is a process for Ministries to work together to achieve these principles.

Services are funded and delivered at local level.

INDICATORS

Every child in difficulty is assessed by a qualified social worker before a decision is made.

Residential care is only used when all other options have been explored.

Admission to any service is through one point of entry.

There is a gate-keeping process in place which is understood, transparent and seen to be effective.

Social benefits are revised to focus on the most needy families.

There is a publicity campaign to promote the principle of every child growing up in a family.

Every Raion has family support, guardianship, national adoption, fostering and re-integration services offered by qualified staff.

Schools offer after-school care.

Every child in an institution has a clear plan aimed at returning her/him to a family.

No child under 7 is in an institution.

A detailed Action Plan is drawn up setting out the steps to achieving the overall goal.

A comprehensive legal framework is put in place to support services for children in difficulty.

Funding is de-centralised to Raions with government setting minimum quality standards and monitoring performance.

The Government sets out the criteria for a comprehensive range of local services.

Small size residential care (maximum of 12 children) is provided for those assessed to be in need of specialist care.

PERFORMANCE TARGETS

There is an assessment service in place in every municipality.

Each worker carries out 12/15 assessments and care plans each month.

The Guardianship body and Gate-keeping commission accept 90% of the recommendations in the assessments.

All services, including international adoption can only be accessed through the assessment and gate-keeping processes.

The pilot schemes in Orhei, Unghen and Cahul are extended in a planned process to all other Raions.

Community assessments of need are carried out in each municipality to decide what level and type of community services are needed.

From this there is an analysis of the number of staff and resources needed. This is linked to the work at government level on re-deployment and re-training of staff.

Information meetings are held with civil society, kindergartens and schools to prepare for the return of children from institutions.

Schools have the resources and the authority to offer after-school care to all parents who need it.

The Law on Children in Difficulty covers all of the areas of this strategy.

All children currently in institutions are assessed and plans made to meet their needs.

A detailed financial analysis is made of the current cost of residential care, the cost of alternative services and the transitional costs.

A new model of financing is developed where the money follows the child.

An analysis is made of HR needs – staff redeployment, staff re-training, training of new staff.

There is a detailed plan to manage the transition to community services.

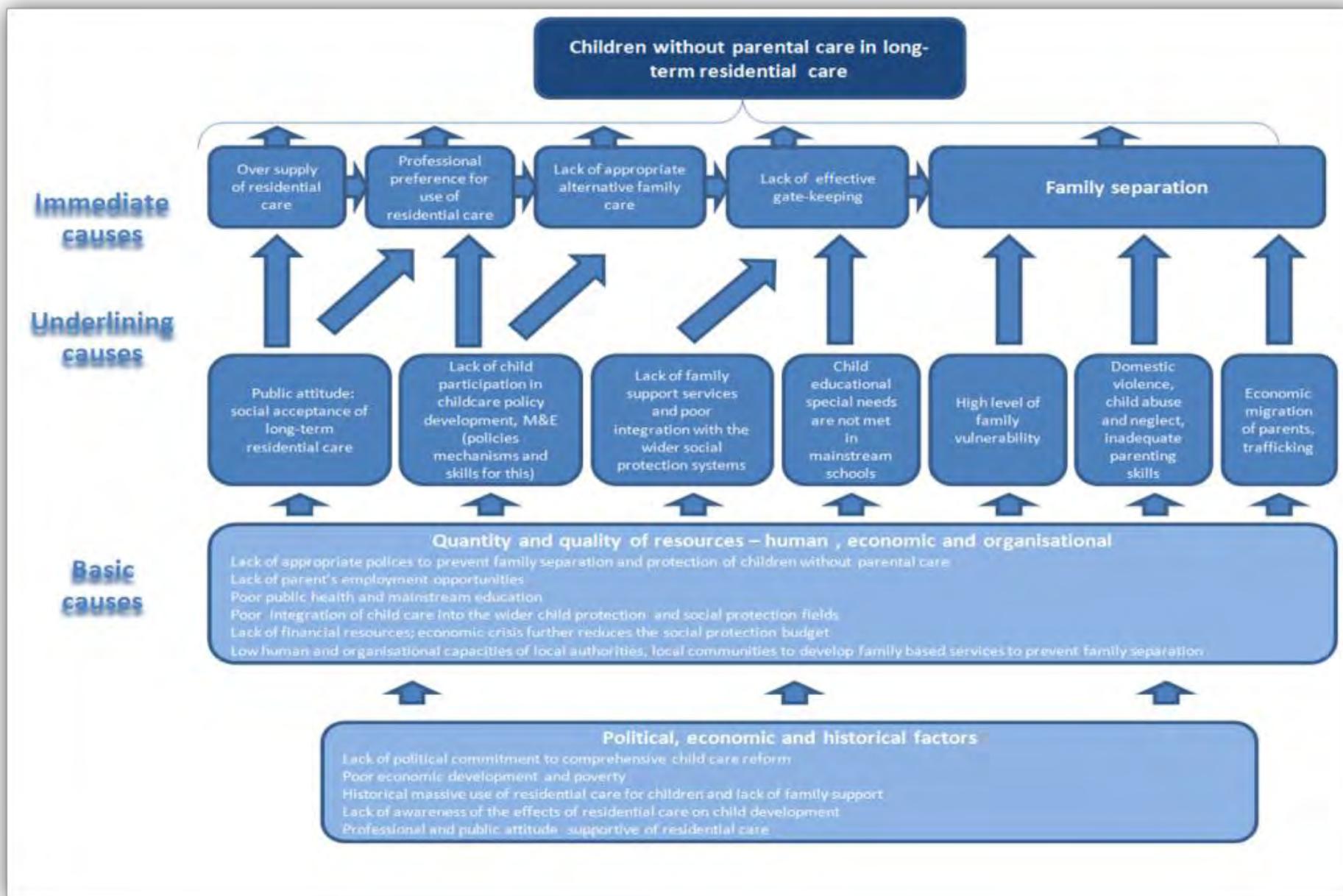
Admissions to large institutions and staff recruitment are stopped. Budgets reduce as children and staff leave.

Minimum standards of care are set for all services.

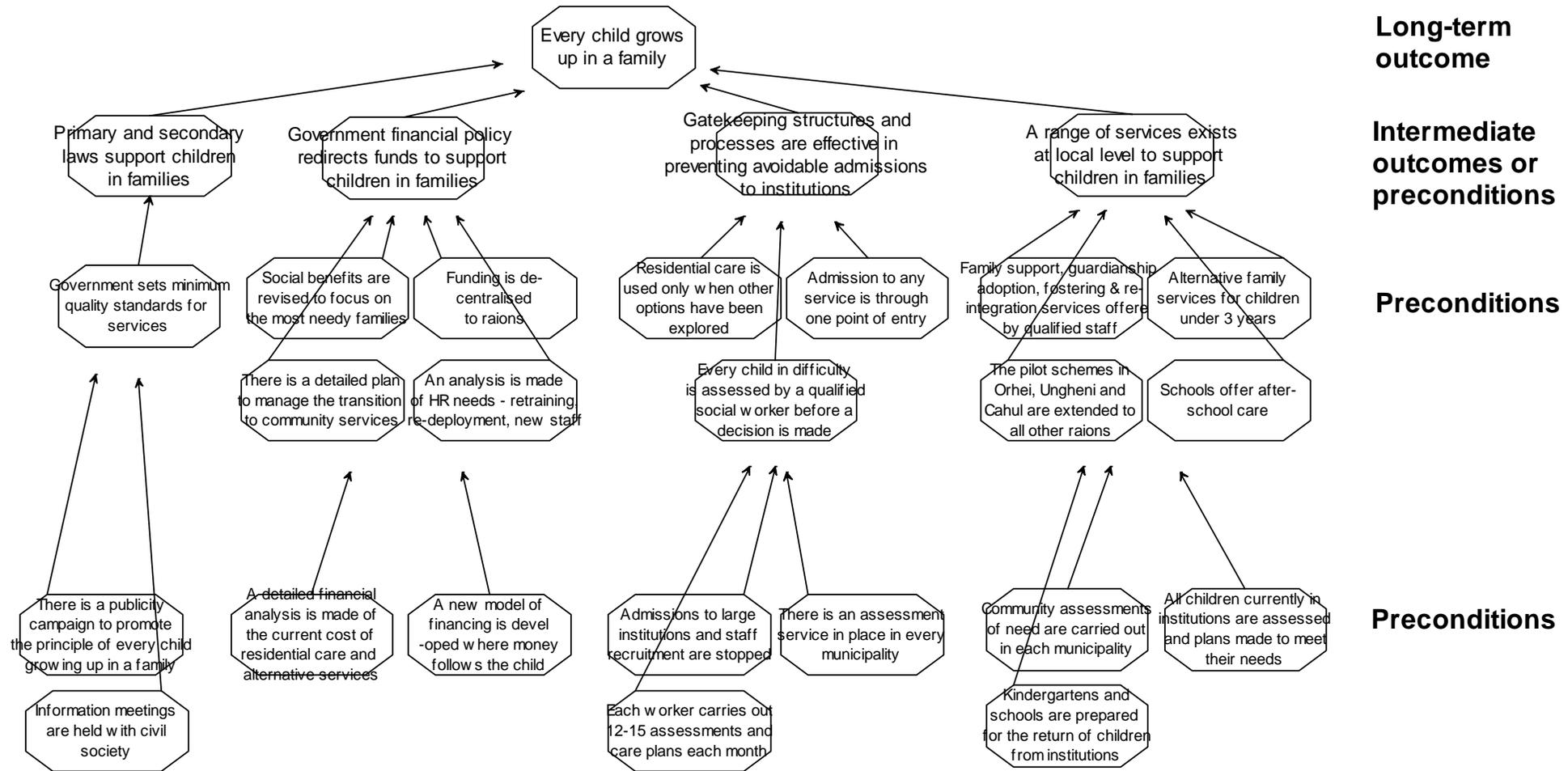
Standards and process are set for inspection and monitoring.

A national plan is developed for caring for the children of parents working overseas.

Annex E: USAID Project Casual Framework



Annex F: TACIS Articulated Theory of Change



Long-term outcome

Intermediate outcomes or preconditions

Preconditions

Preconditions