

# The Child and the Family

Informative Magazine

January 2013

**Republican Phthisio-  
Pulmonologic Center  
for Rehabilitation  
of Children from Cornesti,  
Ungheni raion,  
should be reformed**

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**The law on special  
protection of children at risk  
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**The reform should continue**

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“Family, school, work, and faith are background values we base on, because they generate trust, liberty, recognition, and hope.



Anatol MAMALIGA:

# Let us give value to generosity within us



We are nearing the finish of our most ambitious project ever implemented. In this issue we offer to our readers opinions, analysis, acts of the most important local and central actors and decision makers. So in this page corner I will try to answer again the question – what is the core of this project's life? In this very short time the project team and its partners try to develop an alternative system to protect children and families at risk, and not only. How do we do this? There are numerous methods, and if we describe them in detail, it might take us more than the volume of a magazine. However, what's the most important is what we give to people, especially to children around us. This refers to new atti-

tudes, rules, instructions that regulate the life of every child, since the very birth and till adulthood. This is new order, if you want, that should prioritize a human being's dignity, responsibility for own self, for the child the person brings into the world, and for own neighbour. The essence of our actions is creation of a generous, mutually helping, and participative community. When we say generosity we refer to the help offered to a person, through various formal and informal services, so that the person is able to become self-sufficient. This understanding excludes the alms offered by merciful Social Assistance Department and rich people, that create dependency and humiliation. True generosity we want is the

form of aid that mobilizes people discover their ability to work and self-affirm, gaining respect and responsibility for own self and for persons around.

Family, school, work, and faith are background values we base on, because they generate trust, liberty, recognition, and hope. A community in which every person has dignity and potential. We are aware that this vision can be reached only through consequent and sustainable actions that go beyond a project's lifetime. However, the thoughts, aspirations, and, especially, experience gained, reinforce our confidence that the way we have chosen is correct. And we will go through this way, confidently, together, till its end.

**”When we say generosity we refer to the help offered to a person, through various formal and informal services, so that the person is able to become self-sufficient...True generosity we want is the form of aid that mobilizes people discover their ability to work and self-affirm, gaining respect and responsibility for own self and for persons around.**

**Valentina BULIGA,**  
**Minister of Labour, Social Protection,**  
**and Family**

**“Progress depends on the  
work of a team that has the  
same objectives and is based  
on the same values”**



Family is a decisive factor in the development of the society as a whole, and it, the family, is becoming increasingly integrated into the activity of the society. We need to focus our efforts on the promotion of family-oriented policy, in order to increase its welfare and invest in every family. We should give priority to capacity building of the parents in raising and educating their children. Although the parents have the biggest responsibility for the development of their children, the society, in its turn, should support the parents' efforts. The existing situation clearly points out the need to develop and implement complex support activities for families with children in difficulty and at risk. Now we have to focus our efforts and policies, first of all, on providing an efficient legal, administrative, and institutional framework, in order to prevent difficult situations, through sustainable mechanisms of identification, evaluation, assistance, referral, and monitoring of families with children at risk, paying special attention to early intervention at community level. We must make all efforts to identify necessary resources in order to create a sustainable prevention/primary intervention framework, because we

are aware that solid intervention in this area today, will bring consistent benefit to the state after 18 years, in the new generation raised in a protective environment.

The Ministry of Labor, Social Protection, and Family, together with its partners, implemented a set of actions to create solid base for an efficient and integrated child and family protection system. This also includes the social assistance system reform, the residential child care system reform, implemented in partnership with the Ministry of Education and the civil society. In 2012, there were 105 day care social centers for families with children in difficulty, 164 foster care families with 239 children in placement, 80 family-type homes with 342 children in placement, 1140 community social assistants employed in all communities across the country. Most children taken out from residential care returned to their biological families or found

alternative families and were integrated into mainstream education. Nevertheless, about 4000 children still remain in institutions and need increased action within the reform, especially very young children and those with disabilities. Effort is still required to consolidate families, in order to create community support centers for families at risk and to increase the number of alternative family-type services. We must be aware that both the residential care system reform and the social assistance system reform include large-scale participation, and the progress depends on the work of a team that has shared objectives based on the same values. A reform can become successful only with active and responsible involvement of everyone of us, all governmental institutions, both at the central and at local levels. This underlines the importance of a shared vision and requires collaboration.

**“ ... the parents have the biggest responsibility for the development of their children, the society, in its turn, should support the parents' efforts.**

**Maia SANDU,**  
**Minister of Education**

## "The reform should continue"



This year marks the fifth anniversary of the residential child-care system reform in the Republic of Moldova. Protection of the child's best interest and securing a family environment for every child, partnership between government structures and the civil society, are the fundamental principles in the implementation of the national strategy and the action plan for the child care system reform in 2007-2012.

Family and community reintegration of children is a complex process, and its successful outcome depends on the way the professionals manage to prepare the children and their parents, the school and the entire society for this process.

We are very glad that the number

**“We are very glad that the number of children in residential institutions dropped 54% in the recent five years, but much work still has to be done to protect children in difficulty.”**

of children in residential institutions dropped 54% in the recent five years, but much work still has to be done to protect children in difficulty. We need to continue the reform for the children who still remain in residential care, while those who were already taken away from residential schools and placed into family settings need our support to have access to qualitative community and family-based services.

Obviously, every child feels better away from the residential system, but we should not underestimate the risks these children are exposed to at their exit from the system. We are half way through; we have enough information to critically analyze our experience in the reform implementation and make necessary improvements. However, an objective and useful evaluation involves following the path of every single child.

The evaluation report of the national strategy and actions plan regarding the residential child care system reform formulates a set of lessons and recommendations regarding the improvement of the mechanism of efforts coordination that involves the relevant institutions, redistribution of their roles, improvement of the finance formula, and reallocations of savings to fund community services, create a system monitoring the enrolment into and exit from institutions. These are recommendations that we need to analyze and apply.







**Stela GRIGORAS,**  
**president of Partnerships for Every Child**

## Quality social services for vulnerable children

The main objective of the USAID-supported project is that by July 2013, the social protection system in three raions, Unheni, Falesti, and Calarase, applies a complex approach to meeting the needs of vulnerable children and their families, by providing them qualitative social services at community level, as well as systems to prevent child separation from family and protection of children left without parental care, from violence, abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

To achieve this objective we collaborate with the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family, and raion councils of Ungheni, Falesti and Calarasi. Without this solid partnership, we don't believe we would be able to offer to hundreds of children access to qualitative social services and the right to a family. We proposed to ourselves, and we can say that we managed, to develop policies and programs to prevent and protect children from family separation, violence, abuse, neglect, and exploitation.

Our team directly contributed to the production of the draft Law on special protection of children at risk and children separated from parents, and we hope that this document will be soon approved by the Parliament. Another important achievement at the national level was the production of a new regulation of the family and children support Service. We consider that this service is central to the prevention of child separation from

family. We hope that this regulation will be approved by the Government by July 2013. Talking about progress and achievements, we also mention the approval of the Regulation of retargeting financial resources from residential care to social and educational services. This document covers now the whole country. The local public authorities started to budget resources they managed to save in the result of the residential care system reform, to allocate them for inclusive education and other services for children.

We are very glad with the partnership established at the central level between the related ministries – Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health – that are key actors in the implementation of the reform at the national level.

Talking about the progress registered locally, we should mention first of all the solution of the cases of hundreds of children and their fa-

milies that were in difficulty at one time or another. Due to prompt intervention of the teams of specialists that act in all three raions, over 1000 children were prevented from institutionalization, being provided family support and alternative family care services.

Among major achievements we mention the closure of four residential institutions in these three raions. We hope to have a final decision regarding Falesti residential school in the near future.

Progress was also registered in the reform of other two institutions from the project's pilot raions: residential school for children with hearing deficiencies in Hirbovats (Calarasi raion), and the Republican Phthisio-Pulmonologic Center for Rehabilitation of Children from Cornesti (Ungheni raion). Our discussions with our partners – Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family, allow us to say that we will talk in the future about confident progress in the reform of these two institutions.

Another very important achievement is that we managed to improve inter-sector communication involving various structures, namely, education, health, social care, police, to ensure prevention measures and child protection.

# Ungheni Social Assistance and Family Protection Department – laureate of UN Human Rights award



**Ungheni Social Assistance and Family Protection Department is one of the laureates of 2012 UN Human Rights award. The prize was awarded to the head of the Department, Mr. Tudor Radeanu, within a festive ceremony organized by the United Nations on the 10<sup>th</sup> of December, on the International Human Rights Day.**

A press release of the UN Development Program informs that Ungheni Social Assistance and Family Protection Department was appreciated for “innovative practical application of human rights at the local level, focusing on the implementation of the UN Guideline on the Alternative Care of Children, adopted by the UN General Assembly in November 2009”.

“This is high appreciation of our daily work done for years. This is appreciation of the team that had been working assiduously”, said Mr. Radeanu after the award ceremony.

Tudor Radeanu was especially satisfied that the appreciation comes from “experts who know the area very well, international experts”.

“This prize is very important for us, it inspires even more confidence in our forces, and more desire to do beautiful things, to work more and be always the first in the country”, Mr. Radeanu mentioned.

Ungheni raion is one of pilot sites of the project “Protecting children in Moldova from family separation, violence, abuse, neglect & exploitation”, implemented by Partnerships for Every Child, supported by USAID.

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# The USAID project at mid-term of implementation

The mid-term evaluation of the project “Protecting children in Moldova from family separation, violence, abuse, neglect & exploitation” performed in the Summer 2012, shows that the project may be considered a very ambitious action taken in limited time and challenging environment.

**And** this – despite the fact that during its implementation the project faced numerous challenges, including political instability, counter-productive mentality, biased attitudes, and, in some cases, extreme difficulties faced by families and communities.

Nevertheless, Beth Bradford, the international expert who performed the evaluation, considers that the project caused positive and sustainable changes in the lives of the children who were supported to leave residential care, and in the lives of the children, whose separation from families was prevented.

## **Direct results of the project include:**

- 308 children from five institutions were deinstitutionalized, 167 children from 130 families were provided support after reintegration.
- Four out of seven residential institutions from the pilot regions were closed, resulting the project activities: in Ungheni, one auxiliary school and one residential (secondary) school were closed; one republican-level specialized medical institution for children with tuberculosis or those who entered in contact with infected persons, continues its activity (126 children placed here were evaluated and their care plans were developed); in Falesti, one auxiliary school was closed, and Falesti residential (secondary) school is in the last stage of transformation: 90% of the children were reintegrated into their biological families or placed into guardianship; the auxiliary school of Calarasi was closed, while the republican specialized school for children with hearing deficiencies is under transformation, its 112 children were evaluated and care plans for them were developed.
- With the help of the project, institutionalization of 1020 children was prevented.
- 72 schools from the project’s three pilot raions are implementing the inclusive education model for children with special education needs.

## **The impact on the child and the family**

According to the evaluator, the families members are enjoying the benefits of the reintegration, and are happy to have their children at home, despite existing challenges, especially those of economic nature. None of the parents expressed regret or anxiety regarding the child’s coming back to the

family, although some parents invoked the need of support, namely, financial or material aid.

At the same time, the children who participated in the research don't want to remember their past experience of family separation. The reintegrated children go to community schools. In spite of initial fears regarding school and community inclusion expressed earlier, the children said that they were supported by their colleagues and that they had made friends both in the schools they studied and in their communities.

Beth Bradford says that the positive effects and the direct impact showed above can be certainly attributed to the project intervention. The project team members know basically each of those 300 children who left the institution.

### The impact on capacity building

The evaluation also shows special approach to capacity building of actors involved into the project implementation. Community social assistants, teaching staff, specialists, decision-makers from various areas, other officials and professionals admit that their attitudes, behaviors, skills, and practices were improved as direct outcome of the trainings they have provided during the project. Moreover, they now have clear vision of the problem existing in their community, and, despite insufficient resources, they will continue to develop qualitative services for children and families.

#### During the project, training was provided to:

- 112 community social assistants and community centers social assistants
- 24 local child protection decision-makers and specialists
- 7 local decision-makers participated in a study visit to Great Britain
- 300 school headmaster and depute headmasters in charge with education



- 302 support teaching staff and inclusion managers
- 146 staff members of 5 residential institutions
- 120 health-care specialists and police officers
- 99 mayors
- 25 national decision-makers
- 6 national decision-makers participated in a study visit to Great Britain

All these data reflect the project's sustainable impact. These achievements cannot be denied. If we paraphrase one of regional officials, **“Now we don't have a way back”**.

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**A**ccording to the evaluator, the families members are enjoying the benefits of the reintegration, and are happy to have their children at home, despite existing challenges, especially those of economic nature. None of the parents expressed regret or anxiety regarding the child's coming back to the family...

**Tudor RADEANU,**  
**Vice-President of Ungheni raion, Head of Social Assistance**  
**and Family Protection Department**

## “We work for the best interest of the child”

Ungheni raion is among the first areas of the country that involved into the residential care system reform. The raion's two residential institutions – residential school and Sculeni auxiliary school – are closed now. About 120 were reintegrated into their biological or extended families. When family reintegration was not possible, the children were placed into alternative services: foster care, family-type homes, and social assistance centers for children. Sculeni auxiliary school was transformed into a placement center, with conditions close to family environment, while the children who had been previously placed into this school attend the community school now. The building of the former residential school of Ungheni will be used as high school soon. The financial resources saved as a result of the reorganization of these two residential facilities were fully invested in the development of services for children. Thus, several new foster care units (families) were approved, family-type homes, and a placement center were opened, etc. There are 20 foster care families, several family-type homes and day care centers for children in difficulty in the raion in present.

The situation of children reintegrated from former residential in-

stitutions is permanently monitored by social assistants. This monitoring has multi-sector and multi-discipline dimension, because a child's problem is impossible to be solved without the involvement of the child's teacher, family doctor, district police officer, and civil society.

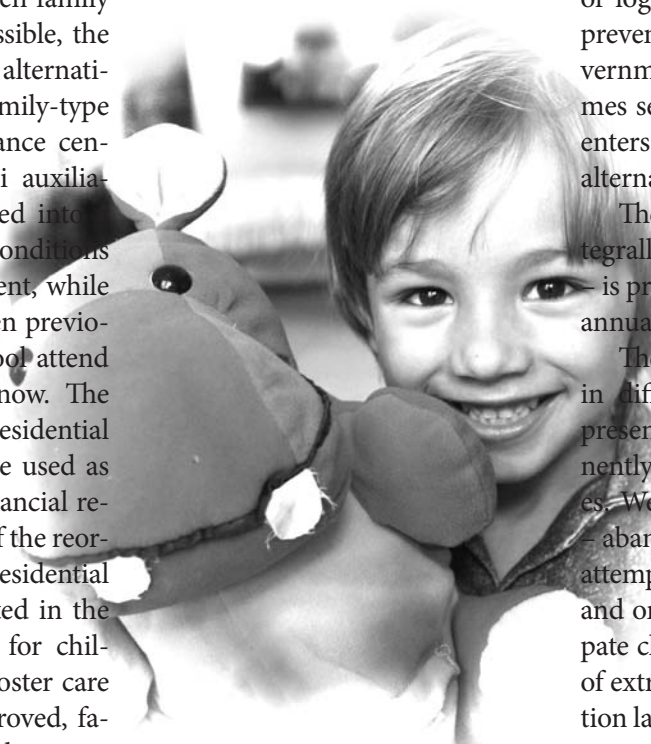
The raion has unique experience in the country, in terms of abandonment prevention at birth. Families and children in difficulty are provided special protection, while individual care plans are produced for every case.

In parallel with other services, family support service was created – an important facility that provides a possibility to solve difficult situations, preventing a family's entry into crisis, and preventing child's separation from parents. This service provides financial, psychological, or logistic support, which helps to prevent the eventual losses the government may have if a child becomes separated from his family and enters the residential care system or alternative social service.

The family support service – integrally covered by the raion budget – is provided at least to 200 families annually.

There are over 9100 children in difficulty in Ungheni raion in present. These children are permanently monitored by the authorities. We work both on urgent cases – abandonment or school drop-out attempts, foster care placements, and on prevention, in order anticipate children's entry into situations of extreme risk, when the intervention lasts longer and is more expensive and less efficient.

We intend to considerably extend the Foster Care service and the number of family-type homes next year. A special objective is to launch respite placement for families of children with disabilities.





# Republican Phthisio-Pulmonologic Center for Rehabilitation of Children from Cornesti, Ungheni raion, should be reformed

**The** residential care reform launched five years ago hasn't reached the Centre from Cornesti. This institution is designed for children who have tuberculosis-infected relatives. While other institutions don't accept placements without the decision of the raion gate-keeping commission, the Cornesti Centre has other rules.

Most children arrive here on the referral of the raion doctor. Only a small number of children – about 20%, come to the Centre after hospital treatment of tuberculosis, while the rest of them end up here because of their families' extreme poverty.

The institution lacking for years in a row running water and elementary conditions of hygiene strongly reminds of post-war period: endless corridors, bedrooms where the only furniture are the beds, bathroom, open only once a week, and the closet with heavy smell. Washing hands is luxury for the institution's residents, and soap, toilet paper, toothpaste are used much rarer than it would be nec-

essary. At least 200 children whom the Government tries to protect from tuberculosis, come to live in these conditions every year in the country

**“We don't give them toys, as they fight for them...”**

Nothing in the bedrooms cramped with beds reminds that children live here. Even if they would like to have personal things, the children wouldn't be able to keep them, because most rooms lack night-tables and wardrobes, while only a few rooms have carpets on the floors. The children don't have slippers, which hardly makes the floors clean.



“The placement of children into the Center from Cornești occurs with severe violations, breaking the child's right to live in a family environment and have access to qualitative health-care and educational services. Thus, the cases of children sent to the Centre by the lung-disease doctor for the purpose of tuberculosis prevention, are not examined by the Gate-Keeping Commission that has the duty to examine all the cases with the risk of the child's separation from family and make recommendations for the guardianship authority in-charge with the child. Besides, the 2nd level guardianship authority is not informed about the decision of taking the children out of their families and their placement into the institution, and, consequently, does not participate in the child's family and community reintegration”...

*From the evaluation report on the situation of the children placed into Republican Phthisio-Pulmonologic Center for Rehabilitation of Children in Cornesti, performed by Partnerships for Every Child.*

In one of ground floor rooms we find 2-3 year olds, the youngest dwellers of the institution, which is against the rules, as the regulation provides for the placement of children between 3 and 11. The room the children spend most of the day is dark and cold. There are no pictures on the walls, definitely no support learning materials, colouring books, pencils, or interactive games. The only sign of civilization is TV and several old and broken toys.

We have a bigger box of toy, they are old but still good. We don't often let them play with those toys, because they start fighting and yelling at each other", explained the care-giver.

### Formal training

The children spend several months, and in some cases, even several years (although the Regulation provides 3-6 months' placements) in the institution. To make sure they don't stay behind the school program, the children attend classes in the first half of the day. Thus, we can find about 20 children in a class-room. The children are from different forms – from the third to the seventh. Although children attending primary classes (forms one – four) are always present in the institution, only three teachers are employed. So, while a fourth form pupil is reading a text, the teacher works with the other children, and the other way round. Consequently, the children don't study all subjects of the school program. Thus, upper forms pupils don't study foreign languages, and they face difficulties when they leave the institution to return to their previous schools.

In their turn, the teachers say they do all they can, to ensure access to education to the children. "We have children who don't know

the alphabet and don't know how to write their names, although they have attended the eighth form in their community schools. We teach them all these things", says Viorelia Binzari, a teacher of several subjects who works with different school forms.

### Children – in isolation, parents - abroad

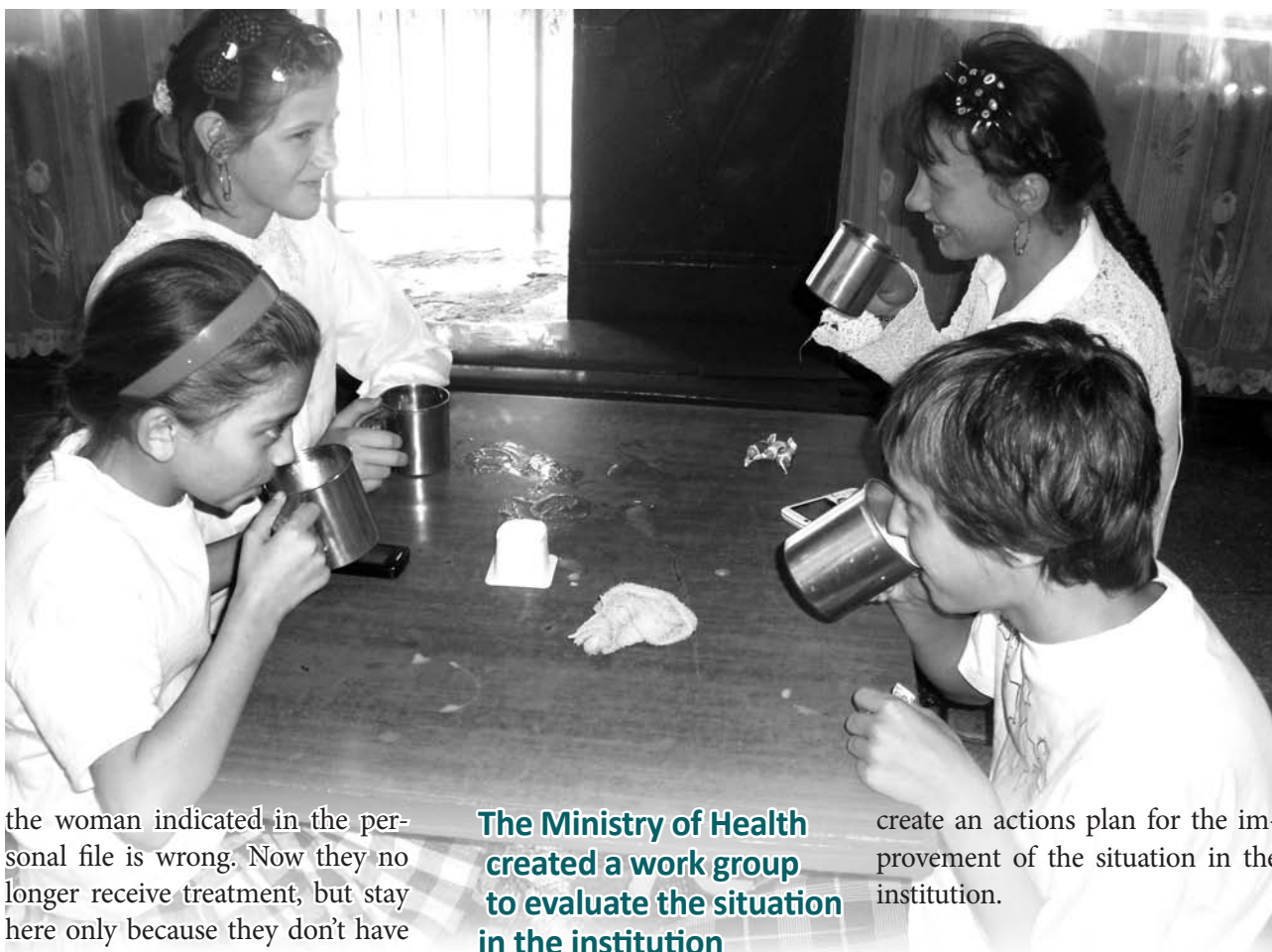
Nobody monitors the treatment of these children's parents, and nobody works to make sure that the families solve their problems. This is why, many children end up here repeatedly, coming back twice or three times. This happened to three siblings from Calarasi raion – Daniela, Stefan, and Sveatoslav. The eldest of them is eight, and the youngest is three. Sources from the raion Social Assistance and Family Protection Department informed us that these three children were placed repeatedly into Cornesti centre, although nobody has tuberculosis in their family. The true

reason of their arrival to the institution is the family's poverty. After taking them to the Centre, their mother departed to the Russian Federation, seeking employment.

Marina's mother also works in Moscow. The girl, who is 15 now, was taken to the institution along with her four brothers, because their aunt who lived with them, got tuberculosis. After the children were placed into the institution for a longer term, the woman went to work abroad.

Olguța, another resident of the Centre, came here 7 months ago, together with her four brothers. Their father died of tuberculosis, and their mother went to work abroad. Unlike her younger brothers, Olguța can't write and read. She used to go to the community school only when her mother would let her. The girl learned something at the Centre, and now she waits to be taken home, as her rehabilitation program ended. The children say, however, that they can't find their mother. The phone number





the woman indicated in the personal file is wrong. Now they no longer receive treatment, but stay here only because they don't have a place to go.

### Millions budget for doubtful comfort

The average cost per child in this institution amounts to 42 thousand lei per year. The Centre's budget has been growing continually within the recent three years, amounting to over 5 million lei last month. Although the state allocates increasing amounts, the conditions remain the same.

According to the norms set in 2009 by the Government, the child's food should cost not less than 44 lei per day. In reality this is reduced exactly 30%, constituting 30 lei per day. With this money the administration has to provide five meals per day to the children.

They also save on medicines costs, allocating twice as little, that is, 5 lei per day, instead of 11 lei as established in the norms.

### The Ministry of Health created a work group to evaluate the situation in the institution

Under the pressure of mass-media materials relating about deplorable conditions in Cornesti Centre, the Ministry of Health dismissed the institution's director, and the Government allocated increased funds for the children. However, this didn't change the essence of the problem – that many children stay here unlawfully, and the conditions are more than unsatisfactory. At the insistence of Partnerships for Every Child, organization that performed a broad evaluation of the children's situation in Cornesti Centre, the Ministry of Health created a work group that will perform internal evaluation of the Centre. Then in February extended meeting with experts from the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family, Ministry of Education, and evaluation team members will be held. The goal of the meeting is to

create an actions plan for the improvement of the situation in the institution.

**Daniela MAMALIGA,**  
Programs Director  
at Partnerships for Every Child

"We will insist on blocking children's entry into the institution and on the improvement of conditions for those who will prove eligible for placement. Once the number of entries into this rehabilitation centre is reduced, the savings obtained should be re-targeted for the improvement of the institution's conditions. And because none of the children here has open form of tuberculosis, one of possible solutions would be to improve the conditions in the institution and the children's integration into community schools. The ideal solution would be that even the children who cannot remain with their parents are placed into foster care".



# Hirbovat school for children with hearing deficiencies will undergo reform

The reform of the educational system of children with hearing deficiencies provides a chance to live a normal life to hundreds of children who are currently isolated from the society. Partnerships for Every Child, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education are currently working to identify solutions for the reform of the school for children with hearing deficiencies in Hirbovat village (Calarasi raion). The goal of this transformation is to ensure that all 120 children who currently are placed into this institution are provided the best conditions of training and development, which will help them to smoothly integrate into the society after leaving school.

The transfer decision was preceded by vast evaluation of the teaching, educational, and living conditions in Hirbovat school.

The curriculum of the Ministry of Education is designed to provide speech skills and common knowledge to children with hearing deficiencies, equally as to other children from mainstream schools. However, things are completely different in reality, as in Hirbovat, even the children who can speak when they come to the institution, basically, are not provided conditions to deve-

lop and train their voice. During the lessons, breaks, after-school activities, gestures and mimic replace verbal communication. The majority of the children ended up here because they were not accepted in their community schools, or because their parents didn't know what to do to help them recover.

The expert group (includes psychologists, pedagogues, and audiologist) that examined all children from Hirbovat institution, concluded that only 5% of children are completely deaf. The remaining 95% have reminiscent

hearing, and if they had hearing good quality devices and worked intensively to develop speech, they could integrate into the society. The evaluation showed that every fourth child placed into the institution has light and moderate deafness, and was enrolled into the institution against the stipulations of the Framework Regulation. In their cases, the list of medical indications and counter-indications for the placement into special residential institution for deaf children and those with hearing deficiencies was not complied with. Thus, the children are



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The institution does not achieve important objectives related to integral development of the child's personality. It does not provide quality education from the perspective of specific and individualized training, does not ensure medico-psychopedagogical rehabilitation of the child in difficulty, does not collaborate actively and permanently with the child's biological family, legal representatives and the extended family, does not facilitate the child's socialization and reintegration into biological, extended, adoptive family or into other family-type forms care, does not monitor the child's situation before and after (re)integration, integrate the child into family and community”

*From the institution's evaluation report*



not provided adequate care and education services, and their stay in the institution is detrimental, rather than beneficial for their skills development, especially for communicative skills, which causes long-term consequences in their intellectual and psycho-emotional development. The evaluation also revealed that the majority of the children didn't use hearing devices because they were either broken or not adapted to the child's ear, and were left at home or locked away by the care-givers. The children don't undergo regular medical examinations with the audiologist, the

condition of the hearing devices is not verified, and the prosthetic devices are not adapted correctly. Some children and parents ignore the hearing devices because they are very expensive and they are afraid they can lose or deteriorate them.

Excessive learning and use of mimics-and-gesture language created background to give up verbal communication, even in the case of children with light and moderate hearing deficiency. As a result, the children do not develop verbal communication skills necessary to communicate with persons outside the institution,

to acquire the school curriculum, to gain profession, and to achieve social integration.

Most leavers of the institution pursue education in a number of vocational schools for deaf persons in Romania, in Chisinau, which is the only option for these children.

The evaluation also revealed that the psycho-social assistance services do not ensure efficient socialization and integration of these children. Although the institution has a social assistant, they do not collaborate with the child's family, guardianship authority, to achieve the child's reintegrati-

on into the family and community. In addition, the payroll does not include psychologists who would work on the children's psychological recovery.

The human resources qualification does not meet the specifics of the institution, and they cannot ensure adequate specialized education and assistance, according to the existing requirement. The school has only one qualified audio-pedagogue, which does not fit the main objective of this type of institution.

The average cost per year per pupil is increasingly growing – from 38069 in 2009 to 50447 in 2012. However, big investments into this type of service do not ensure positive results in further development and integration of the child.

**Veronica CĂPĂTICI,**  
**president of the Association of Deaf Children,**  
**member of the evaluation team:**

“Now that medicine is developed, problems with hearing shouldn't sound like irrevocable verdict, as it was in the past. Even a child with severe deafness can learn to speak, if he has modern hearing equipment and lives in an environment that favours recovery. However, the existing system in the Republic of Moldova isolates these children in special institutions, and most of them don't learn to speak and are deprived of the chance to live a normal life. Generally speaking, the term “deaf and dumb” is improper. A person with impaired hearing cannot speak only because he/she didn't manage to develop communication, while learning only the body language. A serious barrier in the speech development of children with impaired hearing is the fact that



they almost never use individual hearing devices. The government provides these devices with certain periodicity, and the family has to cope on their own if these items break down. Considering that these children live in a residential institution, and that their families visit them quite seldom, the state should provide funds for periodical prophylactic examinations and assistance when this equipment deteriorates”.

**Daniela MAMALIGA,**  
**Programs Director at Partnerships**  
**for Every Child**

“The evaluation of Hirbovat institution and the activities we are implementing there in order to improve, at least for the time being, the situation of children in placement, are part of the activities implemented by the Ministry of Education under the residential care system reform.



Hirbovat institution is included into the ME's plan of residential institutions transformation, and our organization in fact is supporting the Government in its implementation. The evaluation shows that the ME's decision to close this institution is correct, and the children's transfer to Chisinau could be the best solution for the state to reduce, at least partially, the prejudice caused to the children who have lived in an isolated and completely unprepared institution, unable to provide them qualitative care and education. The School No. 12 specializes in the work with children with hearing deficiencies, and is provided with adequate equipment and resources, has well-trained staff and necessary capacity to work with a big number of children”.







**Elena CHITOROAGA,**  
**Specialist in the Protection**  
**of families with children at risk,**  
**Social Assistance and Family**  
**Protection Department,**  
**Calarasi raion:**

## "All children from residential care should come home"

Being aware of the fact that every child has the right to a family, Calarasi raion authorities involved in the residential child care system reform.

Among the achievements registered by now is the reorganization of Calarasi residential school. It should be noted that the majority of children from this institution returned to their biological families, but in cases when the reintegrated was not possible, we identified solutions as close to family environment as possible. Although the residential institution that worked in the raion no longer exists, over 30 children from Calarasi raion are placed in different residential schools in the country. Thus, one of our future objectives is deinstitutionalization of these children. Thus, in 2012, Calarasi Social Assistance and Family Protection Department continued the evaluation of the situation of the children placed in residential schools of Falesti, Straseneni, Droghia, and the "Obstructive Lung Disease Rehabilitation Center" in Cornesti.

Following the evaluation of all children from those institutions, it was concluded that the reason for their separation from families was material difficulty. In this context, it is very important for us to continue

developing the family support service. The reorganization of the residential system obliges us to secure a system of alternative and family-based services to all children.

In all raion communities the multi-disciplinary commissions started to work more actively, which helps to examine and solve the children's problems within cross-sector approach. Thanks to the intervention of these teams of professionals, institutionalization of over 70 children was prevented. The support provided to these families and the prompt intervention of specialists helped these children to stay with their parents or be placed in a substitute family environment.

The trainings held within the project for raion decision-makers, specialists, social assistants, foster

parents, lead to a shift in the vision regarding the choice of protection forms for children in difficulty.

We hope that the approval and implementation of the raion strategy of early intervention will spur the development of the integrated social services system.

We plan to implement a set of activities to take children out of residential institutions situated in the whole country:

- On-going evaluation;
- Determining of the child's status;
- Complex evaluation of the place the child lives;
- Reintegration of the child into the biological/extended family, or placement into alternative family setting;
- Post-reintegration monitoring.



**Following the evaluation of all children from those institutions, it was concluded that the reason for their separation from families was material difficulty. In this context, it is very important for us to continue developing the family support service. The reorganization of the residential system obliges us to secure a system of alternative and family-based services to all children.**

Iraida BINZARI,  
depute president of Falesti raion

“We joined our efforts  
to protect children  
from violence, abuse,  
and neglect”



During our work on the deinstitutionalization of children, closure of residential institutions, and institutionalization prevention in Falesti raion, we understood that in order to have a successful intervention, we need to involve all specialists whose work is related to child protection. It became clear that strong inter-sector collaboration is needed, involving social assistants, educational institutions, health-care, law enforcement, local public authorities level one and level two.

Thus, the first thing we planned to do was to develop a strategy under which all child protection-related structures could cooperate. This collaboration makes interventions truly efficient, while the expenses go down. The strategy was approved by Falesti raion council this month. A work group instituted by the raion president worked on the strategy development. The group was set the goal was to develop a mechanism of cooperation between different structures in-charge with child protection.

The goal of the strategy is to consolidate inter-sector cooperation in the protection of children



... A child protection center works within our social assistance department. Besides, multi-disciplinary commissions work in all communities, and their activities are directly linked to all child protection structures at the raion level ...

against violence, abuse, and neglect, through awareness-raising, early intervention, development of social protection policies concerning children and families, and reduction of risks of severe problems that may require major efforts to be solved.

The strategy contains a clear mechanism under which separate actions of specialists in various areas will be implemented in tight collaboration. This, in fact, is a set of actions at various levels, implemented in various forms, to identify the problem at an early stage, making sure that this problem doesn't go worse. This type of intervention fully meets the best interest of the child. Acting in collaboration between various specialized sectors, we can prevent very many severe consequences of numerous problems that were not solved in the right time. Only knowing the problems and the common points in the activity of various areas of intervention, will early intervention be possible.

We already have rather good experience in the work with the families, but it is more difficult to identify these families and difficult situations. Our society still has stereotypical tendency to hide the problem, and it is very difficult to find a solution in these conditions. However, the solution of such problems in our raion is easier. This is because a child protection center works within our social assistance department. Besides, multi-disciplinary commissions work in all communities, and their activities are directly linked to all child protection structures at the raion level, including the raion child protection council, the gate-keeping commission, the multi-disciplinary commission, and the anti-human-trafficking commission. Collaboration between all these structures ensures a more efficient solution of the problems faced by children and families in difficulty.

# Foster care service evaluated by Advisory Boards of Children

The members of Advisory Boards of Children in Falesti, Ungheni, and Calarasi performed the assessment of the Foster Care (FC) Service in their native raions. The evaluation mainly consisted in interviews with beneficiaries and FC service providers, and showed that the Foster Care Service is extremely useful and necessary.

The first conclusion made by junior evaluators is that foster care offers to children protection and environment that is favorable for their growth and development. Now they can go to school regularly, they are not exploited in hard work, are not forced to beg in streets, and are involved only in activities favoring their learning of life skills. In the families they live now, the children are respected, cared for, loved, and live in the best life conditions. At the same time they have the possibility to participate in various school and extra-school activities, are appreciated, and are loved and protected – these are the conclusions made by members of Advisory Boards of Children.

The monitoring and evaluation process consisted of several stages. Initially, the children participated in a series of trainings where they learned what Foster Care is, and what are the principles of organization and functioning of this service. During their meetings with the specialists from raion social assistance and family protection departments, the children were informed from

the primary source about all aspects they were interested in. In order to test their skills and knowledge obtained from the interviews, the children had a series of trainings where they exercised

their interviewing skills.

Several weeks followed, when the ABC members knocked on the doors of many foster care families, to talk to children in placement and their care-givers.





All in all, 80 foster care families were monitored. The conclusions of those interviews were systematized and compiled in a study in which the children express their views on various aspects of foster care.

The authors of the study recommend, among other, that the child, depending on his/her age, should be announced about his/her placement into foster care in advance. They believe that when it is possible, the child should know the cause and the period of the Foster Care placement. According to the authors of the report, this information would make children have more confidence about their future.

The study underlines that the teachers, especially class head teachers of community schools where the children are to be integrated, should be informed and trained in order to provide efficient integration. This will contribute to the prevention of abuse and discrimination of the child placed into Foster Care. The authors of the study also consider it is very important to make sure that the matching procedure between the child and the foster parents is followed.

The children also mentioned that the authorities should extend this service and give more social guarantees to foster parents.

**Cristina DIACONU,**  
**ABC member,**  
**Ungheni raion:**

There are many children in foster care in Ungheni raion, who were placed into the service following years of residential care. All the children we talked to said they are very well in these

families. And because only up to three children can be placed into a fostering family, the foster caregiver has possibility to develop emotional relation with the child and give him more attention. We consider that this service has very big potential, and it is necessary that the local public authorities develop and support it. We also made a set of recommendation regarding the improvement of the situation of children in FC. Thus, we consider that not only the foster parents should participate in the training, but also their spouses. The child should be announced about his placement into foster care, and, where possible, informed about the cause and term of placement.

**Tatiana BRAGA,**  
**ABC member,**  
**Calarasi raion:**

Resulting our monitoring in Calarasi, we discovered that the children placed into foster care feel much better than they felt before, when they lived in their biological families or residential care. In their previous settings they often suffered of cold, hunger, or violence. Now, in foster care, the children are respected, cared for, loved. They enjoy the best conditions, which allows them to develop, to be appreciated, and to feel true personalities. Of what we observed, we can say that now these children can speak about themselves, can say what they feel, what they like, what they don't like, without any fear that they might be neglected or even beaten. Their placement into this service was a very good choice, because the situation in the families they have been

growing before was hard. Some of them were beaten, maltreated, exploited, forced to witness violence. We consider that foster care service should exist in all communities where there are children in difficulty.

**Cristina CIUPERCA,**  
**ABC member,**  
**Falesti raion:**

We monitored Foster Care, to see the situation of the children placed into this service. To make them more relaxed and ready to participate in our discussions, we organized a set of games and other activities, we told them about our life and invited them to be open with us. We tried this way to find out how they feel in the families they live, in the schools they attend, and in their new communities. We were interested how they relate in their family life and in the communities they live. We asked them if they maintain relations with their biological families and what their plans for the future are. The main conclusion of the monitoring is that foster caregivers have very good attitude to the children in placement.

We also came up with a set of suggestions that might improve this service. We believe that the Foster Care children should meet more often with their biological families, with their parents, brothers, sisters. When a child comes back to his biological family, it is necessary that his situation is closely monitored by social assistants and specialists who work in their communities. We also believe that the government should financially motivate those who want to become foster parents.

# Child and family protection strategy will be finalized till the end of this year

**By the end of the year, the Ministry of Labor, Social Protection and Family (MLSPF) will finalize the draft Child And Family Protection Strategy of the Republic of Moldova for years 2013 - 2020**

In the process of Strategy development, parents, children, specialists, and all interested citizens are consulted. The process is coordinated by the Ministry of Labor, Social Protection and Family, monitored by the National Child's Rights Protection Council, and supported by the Prime-Minister's cabinet.

By now the first round of child consultation regarding the strategy has been finished. In November a series of regional consultations were held in northern, central, and southern regions of the country, cove-

ring various topics and inter-sector matters, where numerous specialists in-charge with child and family protection participated: social assistants, doctors, police officers, and teachers. Direct beneficiaries of the strategy – families with many children, mono-parental families, as well as those affected by migration and those that raise small children – participated in consultations.

According to Viorica Dumbraveanu, Head of Family and Child Rights Protection Department of the MLSPF, "The family and child protection strategy will be a fra-

mework of child and family protection policies, mainly focused on preserving the child in a family environment, on family support that will be provided while the child grows up and receives education. At the same time, the strategy will be focused on the prevention of children's institutionalization. A rather courageous, as we think, engagement is to gradually stop institutionalization of children under 3".

The strategy will be finalized by the end of this year, and followed by a concrete actions plan that will provide necessary finances.





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**T**he new child and family protection Strategy of Moldova intends to combat domestic violence, abuse of women and children, work and sexual exploitation, to create qualitative community services, and to increase welfare of families.

The new child and family protection Strategy of Moldova intends to combat domestic violence, abuse of women and children, work and sexual exploitation, to create qualitative community services, and to increase welfare of families.

The strategy is a logical continuation of the residential child care system reform 2007-2011 that registered significant progress for children. There are twice as fewer children in institutions in present, compared to when the reform started. The children were helped to return to their own biological families or were placed into alternative family-type settings: community homes, family-type homes, foster care families.

The progress, however, was slower for children with disabilities and those under 3. There are still about 200 small children in Moldova, who live in institutions, although they stay there can be dramatic: a common rule says that a child's three months' stay in an institution means one month's delay of his development.

In what follows, the residential child care system reform will focus on ensuring sustainability and intensification of alternative services development, diversification of these services, to cover the whole variety of the child's special needs. The reform will also include the implementation of a sustainable and flexible mechanism of cooperation between institutions at all administrative levels: social protection, health, education systems, to ensure early intervention, prevention, assistance, and integration of children in difficulty.



# The law on special protection of children at risk and of children separated from parents

The Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family produced recently the draft Law on social protection of children at risk and of children separated from parents. The need of this draft law was driven by existing gaps in the child protection system.

“We have been operating for years with notions we didn’t have very clear definitions in the legislation, such as “child at risk”, “child in difficulty”, etc. In these conditions each specialist would interpret these notions in their own way. Often this created certain difficulties when we tried to analyse the situation of the children we worked with. The document defines a set of main notions used in the child protection system that have been used with different meanings until recently. Thus, for the first time, clear definitions of notions, such as child at risk, child separated from parents, abandoned child, abuse, neglect, placement, will be introduced”, said Viorica Dumbra-

veanu, Head of Family and Child’s Rights Protection Department of the MLSPF.

The legal requirements concerning the identification and protection of children left without parental care are contained in the Family Code and are general and outdated. At the same time, the activity of the guardianship authorities that work within the local public administration of levels one and two is not efficient, their roles being very vaguely determined. Besides, the decision-making and operational framework referring to the forms of protection for children left without parental care, and those related to the identification of the child’s

status in the protection system are not clearly regulated. The draft Law clearly determines the identification, evaluation, assistance, reference, monitoring and evaluation procedures for children at risk and those separated from their parents, and identifies the authorities and structures responsible for the application of these procedure.

The draft law intends to attribute guardianship functions to mayors and territorial departments of social assistance and family protection that, in fact, perform all duties related to the protection of children in their territorial administrative units.





**” The draft law proposes to include new notions: “child separated from parents – child at risk, effectively left without parental care, in situations determined by the absence of the parents, including in the cases when the parents live and work abroad, child taken from the parents due to existing imminent risk for his/her life and health, and child to whom was attributed the status of left temporarily without parental care, or child left without parental care”**

The draft law also provides procedures of self-notice and registration of notices related to children at risk, as well as a more clear definition of risk situations. After the approval of these legislative initiatives, the mentioned procedures are intended to be applied at the national level while evaluating and recording children at risk.

The draft law proposes to include new notions: “child separated from parents – child at risk, effectively left without parental care, in situations determined by the absence of the parents, including in the cases when the parents live and work abroad, child taken from the parents due to existing imminent risk for his/her life and health, and child to whom was attributed the status of left temporarily without parental care, or child left without parental care”

The children separated from parents will be divided into the following specific groups: children whose parents or the only parent are (is) abroad for work; children temporarily left without parental care; children left without parental

care, whose status is determined by a combination of characteristics.

Besides, the draft law clearly determines the situations and conditions in which children can be attributed the status of children temporarily left without parental care and children left without parental care.

The draft law will also specify terms, specialists, and authorities in-charge with decision-making regarding the evaluation of the children’s situation, attribution of status and placement of children separated from parents.

In addition, the legislative initiative regulates emergency placement and planned placement of children, as well as types of social services into which the children can be placed.

The document stipulates compulsory cooperation on child protection, between the local and territorial guardianship authorities from various territorial administrative units, and staff of central and local public authorities, departments, institutions, and services subordinated to them and respon-

sible for social assistance, education, healthcare, law-enforcement. Then, based on this stipulation, the Government will approve the cross-sector cooperation mechanism that will ensure multidisciplinary approach to the process of evaluation and assistance of children at risk, which will produce significant effect mainly on children victims of abuse, violence, and neglect.

“The draft law was produced in a participative process, with the consultation of the civil society representatives, central and local public authorities (at the Congress of Local Authorities of Moldova). Consultations were held during the entire process – starting with the determination of the law concept and structure, and working on its contents.

We remind that the public association Partnerships for Every Child made a considerable contribution, playing the role of mediator in relation with the civil society and local partners, and ensured the expertise and opinion consultation of all partners”, said Viorica Dumbraveanu.

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