

The future begins in the family



Newsletter of the Project "Protecting children of Moldova from family separation, violence, abuse, neglect and exploitation", implemented by EveryChild in partnership with the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family and the Ministry of Education



Program of inclusive education approved by the Government

The Government recently approved the 2011-2020 Program of inclusive education development in the Republic of Moldova. The document sets the conceptual framework of inclusive education, based on the need to continuously change and adopt the national educational system, making it meet the needs of all children.

Continuation pag. 5

Training of specialists ensures success

Decision-makers in child and family in difficulty protection, specialists of raion social assistance and family protection departments, NGOs working in the area, staff of community schools and residential institutions, will be provided in the new academic year training that will help them solve problems in child protection and separation from family. The trainings will be provided within the inclusive education pilot project, said Valentin Crudu, Head of pre-school, primary, and mainstream secondary education Department of the Ministry of Education.

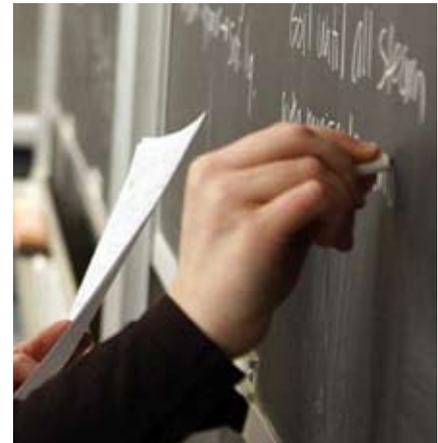
Thus, decision-makers, specialists from social assistance and family protection departments, social assistants, and NGOs representatives will be trained in case management, supervision, referral mechanism, gate-keeping, family support, reintegration, foster care services, post-reintegration monitoring, and community mobilization. Along with the existing services, this category of specialists will have to identify new opportunities to develop alternative services to

meet the needs of all children.

The training will be also provided to the representatives of specialized services, such as community centres, to foster carers, parents-educators from family-type homes, etc.

The teachers from the schools where the children from residential care will be integrated, will be trained on inclusive education and will learn new methods and practices of working with the child. In all community schools, support groups for children will be created.

„The support teaching staff are key persons in the process of child inclusion, that is why it is important that they are trained, know how to work with these children, how to facilitate the process of the child's school and social inclusion. Unfortunately, practice demonstrates that some teachers do not know how to interact with the children with special educational needs – they leave them sitting in the rear rows and do not involve them into the educational process”, said Mr. Valentin Crudu.



Inclusive education on the agenda of the reform steering committee

The Ministry of Education had ordinary meeting with the members of the Steering Committee of the residential childcare system and inclusive education development reform.

Continuation pag. 4

Inclusive education on the agenda of the reform steering committee

Continuation from pag. 3

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Present at the meeting were representatives of the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Health, UNICEF Moldova, LUMOS Moldova, EveryChild Moldova, etc.

The minister of Education, Mr. Mihail Șleahțișchi, thanked the development partners for the support provided for the implementation of the residential childcare system reform, and underlined the importance of inclusive education development in the Republic of Moldova.

Sandie Blanchet, UNICEF Moldova, mentioned that all children from Moldova have the right to qualitative education. “There are seven thousand children in institutions, majority of whom are classified as having disabilities. Closure of residential institutions and providing appropriate financial support to families could save thousand lei for the country”, she said.

Creation of a cross-sectors working group was decided at the meeting. The group will develop the national actions plan for the implementation of inclusive education development program in the Republic of Moldova for years 2011 – 2020.

The members of the steering committee also discussed the coordination of activities for the development of normative acts on inclusive education and the approval of inclusive education piloting methodology.

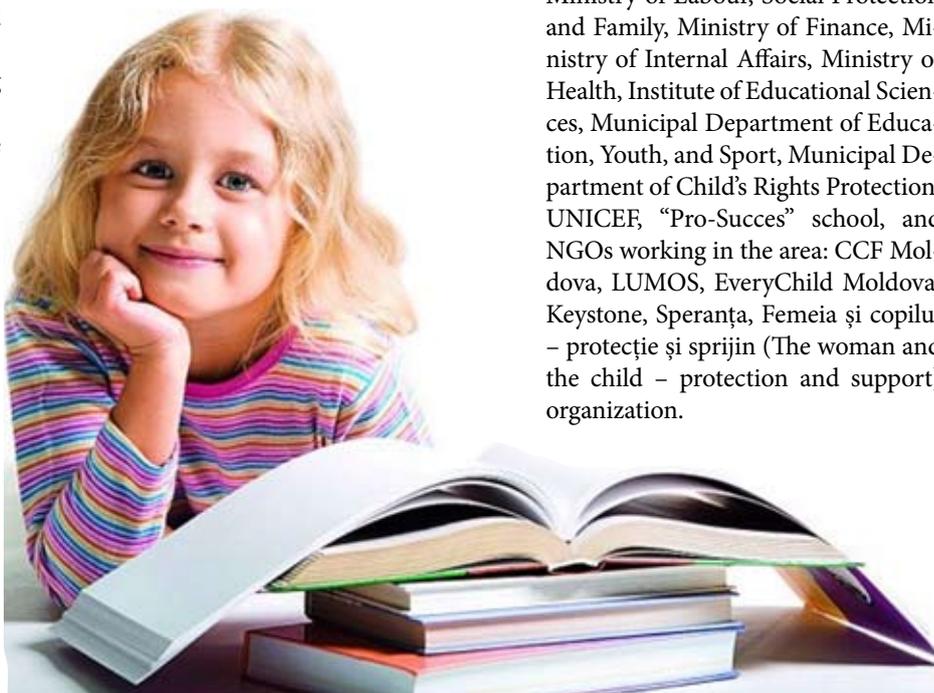
The campaign of mass-media coverage of the strategy of residen-

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tial childcare system reform and inclusive education development was another point of the meeting agenda.

The reform steering committee was instituted in 2010, for the goal of cross-sectors coordination of activities within the residential childcare system reform.

This unit includes representatives of State Chancellery, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Health, Institute of Educational Sciences, Municipal Department of Education, Youth, and Sport, Municipal Department of Child’s Rights Protection, UNICEF, “Pro-Succes” school, and NGOs working in the area: CCF Moldova, LUMOS, EveryChild Moldova, Keystone, Speranța, Femeia și copilul – protecție și sprijin (The woman and the child – protection and support) organization.



Program of inclusive education approved by the Government



Continuation from pag. 3

The implementation of the Program of inclusive education development will contribute to the achievement of the priority mission of education – that of ensuring equal chances and access to qualitative education to each child and adult, at all levels and steps of the educational system.

The general objectives of the Program are: promote inclusive education as educational priority, in order to avoid exclusion or marginalization of children, young people, and adults; develop the normative and didactic-methodical framework, to promote and ensure the implementation of inclusive education; build a friendly, accessible educational framework capable to meet the expectations and requirements of the beneficiaries; build inclusive culture and society.

... Implementation of the Program of inclusive education development aims to replicate school integration of disadvantaged children at national level. Every child, regardless of the material situation of his family, of residence, ethnicity, language spoken, gender, age, health condition, learning skills, should and will be integrated into general education, receiving individual education that he lacks so much.

According to Mr. Crudu, “Education cannot be considered a privilege of an isolated group of children able to pursue mainstream education without any difficulties. Children are different, they have different potential and needs, but all of them have the right to qualitative education. Isolation of children with special educational needs

from their peers and from the community school is outdated and dangerous practice. Instead of providing solutions, such practice generates only new problems”.

Authorities say that implementation of the Program of inclusive education development aims to replicate school integration of disadvantaged children at national level. Every child, regardless of the material situation of his family, of residence, ethnicity, language spoken, gender, age, health condition, learning skills, should and will be integrated into general education, receiving individual education that he lacks so much.

In schools with inclusive practices, depending on their institutional capacity, support services will be developed to facilitate the inclusion of children with special educational needs.

According to the program of inclusive education development in the Republic of Moldova, services will be created at community level, to identify, evaluate and diagnose the children’s development at early stage. In order to increase effectiveness of the inclusion process, services of school inclusion, education, monitoring of school evolution, professional orientation, and socialization, will be created for various categories of children,

Also at community level, psycho-pedagogical (recovery and rehabilitation of development, school support, development of plans of individual services, curriculum adaptation, etc.), psychological (assistance and consultation to children, young people, adults, to families, teaching staff, community), and support (support teaching staff, personal assistant, assistive technologies, body language interpretation, etc.) services will be created.

According to the needs, complementary and optional services of education, specialised education (speech therapist, tiflopedagog, kinetotherapist, etc.), social or legal assistance, transport, travelling and access improvement of institutions will be provided.

“Success stories motivate us to insistently promote inclusive education”



Interview with Irina MALANCIUC, Director of Lumos Foundation Moldova

families to obtain certain documents. The children's family reintegration goes hand in hand with their mainstream school integration. Besides, a part of Lumos activities are oriented for the prevention of other children's institutionalization.

- You said that about one hundred children were reintegrated into their families. Is anybody monitoring their situation?

- The specialists of Lumos monitor all stages of the child's reintegration process. Recently, our experts, together with the representatives of raion departments of education, youth and sport performed the assessment of the children deinstitutionalized from the auxiliary school of the town of Mărculești, Florești raion, and from special school of Ialoveni town. The members of the evaluation teams talked to the children's head teachers, school psychologists, school headmasters, community social assistants, family doctors, parents or representatives of guardianship authorities – with all actors involved in the child inclusion. The results of the monitoring show that the majority of the deinstitutionalized children successfully adapted to the new school environment. They say that they feel much better in their families and community schools. Several children who came from residential care became good examples for their colleagues. Teachers and

school psychologists said that the integrated children became more communicable, overcame their shyness and fear, became better organized, more careful and exigent to themselves. In addition, the health problems that the children faced before deinstitutionalization reduced or disappeared altogether once the children left residential care and came back to the family.

- Did you encounter any difficulties in the process of children's reintegration?

- Our experience shows that the inclusion of children with special educational needs into mainstream schools is possible, but it needs a systemic approach. Teachers lack work tools dealing with these children. Lumos experts, along with the Ministry of Education specialists, developed a model of inclusive education that is to be piloted based on the Methodology promoted by the ministry. This model supposes the integration of children with special educational needs into mainstream schools, with the organization of individualized educational process and provision of adequate assistance. Besides, support structures and services will be created, such as day care or resource centres, support teaching staff positions will be introduced, other support activities will be organized. Success stories motivate us to insistently promote inclusive education.

- Thank you for the interview.

- What or who is “Lumos”? What are the goals of the organization?

- “Lumos” is a London-based non-governmental organization founded by the writer J.K. Rowling – the author of Harry Potter novels. Lumos Moldova is a branch of this organization, open since 2006. Lumos supports the Government of the Republic of Moldova in the implementation of the national child care policies, through its four projects that come to ensure the right of the child to grow in a family, the right to qualitative education, to development and survival, to appropriate social protection. The projects are implemented in three pilot regions: Florești, Ialoveni, and Chișinău Municipality. One of the most complex and ambitious projects under implementation is that of supporting the government in the residential childcare system reform.

- What is the contribution of Lumos to this reform?

- In 2010, about one hundred children from Chisinau, Floresti, and Ialoveni residential schools were reintegrated into their native or extended families. When we speak about deinstitutionalization, we do not limit only to the child's transfer from the residential environment into the family. The specialists of Lumos provided psychological consultation to the families and children, preparing them for the change that was to produce in their lives. In some cases, the organization contributed to the improvement of living conditions, helped





Children from Napadova returned to families and community

The results of the evaluation of children from Napadova residential school is the subject of round table discussions held by the Ministry of Education, supported by UNICEF and Lumos Moldova

During the discussion, Mr. Valentin Crudu of the Ministry of Education said that institutionalization of the child for undetermined term is a severe violation of the child's rights.

The evaluation results reveal that among the most frequent causes of child institutionalization are family problems (alcohol abuse of the parents, disorganized lifestyle, material difficulties, lack of a place to live). According to the results, 33 children out of 50 lived in the institution isolated from the society for more than seven years.

The life stories of these children are impressive. Thus, a girl from Strășeni said in an interview to the evaluation team that she wanted to change her name, face, citizenship, and to leave Moldova, forgetting about the residential school and her life there. Such sincere confessions express the drama that children in institutions still live. In this context, the specialists of the evaluation team recommended the children's integration into biological or extended families, and in cases when this is impossible,

the children should be placed into family-type services, such as foster care, family-type homes, or community homes.

"Lumos" is ready to support local public authorities in this difficult and complex process of residential institutions closure. Domnica Gănu, program manager of Lumos underlined that the transfer of dein-

stitutionalized children to other residential schools is against international child's rights protection policies.

Since September 01, 2011, only 22 children remain in the institution. It has been decided that they attend the community school, while continuing to live in the Napadova residential facility.



Four boys from Orhei residential school returned to their own home

“I cried today, when they took me away from the residential school... Not because I regretted leaving, but because I understood that I had got out from that place at last”, said Ion, one of the four boys from Orhei residential school for boys with severe mental disabilities, who were recently transferred to the first Community home in Moldova – a social service created in the village of Mitoc, Orhei raion.

The service was created by Orhei Raion Council’s Social Assistance and Family Protection Department, in partnership with Keystone Human Services International Moldova Association (KHSIMA), under the “Inclusive Community-Moldova” program.

The Community home is furnished and provided with all necessary things for its inhabitants. The facility provides secure, accessible, and comfortable environment, similar to family. Four boys with severe intellectual and physical disabilities,

in need of permanent support, will live in this home. 6 support specialists working in shifts will help them in their everyday activities.

The Community Home social service in alternative to residential care for persons with mental disabilities (psycho-neurological residential homes and residences for children with mental disabilities).

Thus, adults and children with mental disabilities, including those incapable of action, who need continuous protection, care, and specialized support (incapable of

self-support, self-service, self-care without continuous support within the community), are placed in a community environment with higher life quality, where they have access to all community services.

By the end of September, other four boys from Orhei residential home for boys with severe mental disabilities will be placed into the community home of Voloave village, Soroca raion.

The Inclusive Community-Moldova program is implemented by Keystone Human Services International Moldova Association, in partnership with the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family (MLSPF).

In present, 269 children and young people deinstitutionalized from or at risk of being placed into Orhei residential home for children with severe mental disabilities are supported by the Program.

School managers ready to implement the reform

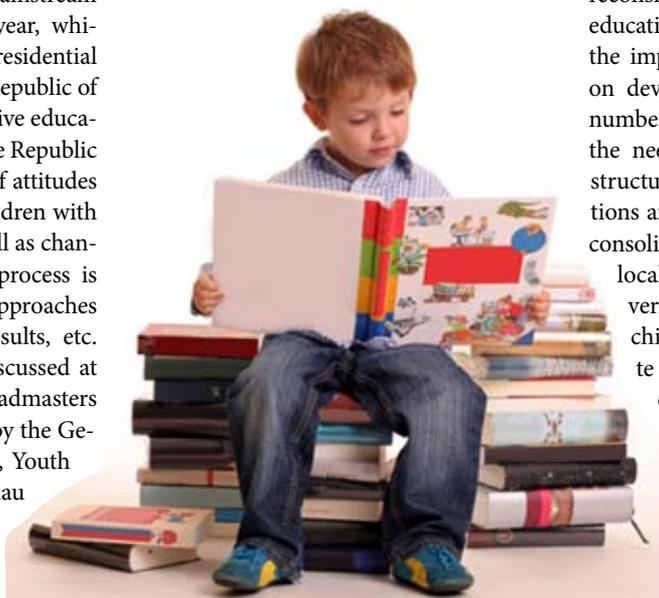
Individual approach to children with special educational needs, including deinstitutionalized children, is one of the key principles of inclusive education that ensures successful school inclusion. The number of children leaving residential institutions and integrated into mainstream education is increasing every year, which meets the objectives of the residential childcare system reform in the Republic of Moldova. Approval of the inclusive education development program in the Republic of Moldova supposes the shift of attitudes of school managers towards children with special educational needs, as well as changing the way the educational process is organized, application of new approaches in the evaluation of school results, etc. These and other issues were discussed at a methodology seminar for headmasters of Chisinau schools, organized by the General Department of Education, Youth and Sport (GDEYS) of Chisinau Municipal Council, in partnership with Lumos Foundation Moldova.

The school managers stressed that it is important to modernize the infrastructure, change attitudes and conditions, to ensure the development of inclusive education.

The model structure of the individual educational plan (IEP) was discussed at

the seminar, as a key tool in the organization of learning/development activities for children with special educational needs.

School headmasters were involved into a practical exercise allowing them to express their own opinions in terms of reconsidering the activities of mainstream educational institutions, in the context of the implementation of inclusive education development program 2011-2020. A number of school directors spoke about the need to create and expand support structures/services in educational institutions and in the community, as well as to consolidate partnership with the parents, local public authorities, and non-governmental organizations working in child rights protection, and to promote good practices of school inclusion of children with special educational needs. Besides, the need was stressed, of organizing training and methodology seminars for the teaching staff, to ensure successful implementation of inclusive education.



Foster care – a chance for children in difficulty

Childcare specialists from seven raions participated in a seminar on the creation and development of the foster care service

The training was held within the project of “Supporting local public authorities in Moldova in the delivery of alternative family-type services to children without parental care”, implemented by Every-Child Moldova in collaboration with the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family, and with the local public authorities of Anenii Noi, Sângera, Șoldănești, Florești, Glodeni, Râșcani, Ocnița raions, Bălți municipality, and Transnistrian region.

Foster care is a social service that provides optimum conditions of care in a family environment to children who temporarily or permanently lack parental care. The goal of the service is to provide temporary protection to the child in difficulty, ensuring his socialization and reintegration into the biological, extended, adopting family or community. Applicants to the foster carer position should be persons under 60, able to provide temporary family care to the child, in order to ensure his reintegration into the biological family.

Irina SPIVACENCO, Every-Child project manager, said that the foster care service will extend this year in other eight raions of the country. All-in-all, currently there are 105 foster care families in the country, who provide care to 152 children.

Natalia TERTEAC, main specialist in family issues of Chisinau Municipal Department of Child’s Rights Protection:



“The importance of the Foster Care service that appeared in the year 2000 in Moldova, is time-proved. The Department I re-

an integral person, a citizen without psychological problems, without difficulties in social integration.

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present is the first structure that developed this service, in spite of the fact that it lacked any legal base at that time. FC offers the child a possibility to grow and be educated in a family environment. As a result, we have

The main beneficiary of foster care is the child. The state also gains, because this service is much cheaper and provides much better conditions for the child’s development, compared to residential institutions. In present, there are 16 foster care families in Chisinau. The service will be further extended and developed, and certain funds have been already allocated for this”.

Zinaida BUNESCU, head of Social Assistance and Family Protection Department, Anenii Noi raion:

“There is only one foster care family in Anenii Noi raion, fostering three children. Just like in many other areas, there are very many children in Anenii Noi, who need this support. We are trying to create new services for children in difficulty, because there is a total lack of them in our raion.

Although we do not have vast experience, we understand that children feel better in Foster Care, as they get there protection and education in a real family.

To meet to all emergencies, we need at least three foster care families. The local public authorities area ready to provide us all necessary support in this respect, and we only need to identify the families that are ready to provide this kind of service”.



“They stole six years from his childhood! Nobody will give back to him what he has lost...”

Elena starts fidgeting when she thinks of the time that her son Dumitru, a 15-year old teenager, spent in Sculeni, Ungheni residential auxiliary school. The woman blames the authorities of the school where Dumitru attended first form, and the raion psycho-medico-pedagogical commission, for the fact that her child was abusively placed in an institution for children with mental disabilities.

Dumitru ended up in Sculeni school because of poor school records. The boy never attended kindergarten, and he was totally unprepared for school. Because he was lagging far behind his peers, reducing

the performance of the entire school, the headmaster recommended him for the examination of the raion medico-psychopedagogical commission. The commission decided to send the boy to Sculeni.

The family’s petition that the child is allowed to repeat the first form received no response.

Separation followed – that neither Dumitru, nor his parents could ever accept. The mother confesses that she often went to the institution and asked permission for the boy to go home one day earlier, and sometimes they would go back to school one or two days later than required.

“I couldn’t accept the idea that he was there, far from us. I knew he was cold sometimes, because the huge room where they slept had only two heating radiators that barely gave any warmth. I knew that sometimes he was unable to soothe his hunger”, says the woman.

Dumitru says that all days were alike in Sculeni – the same schedule, the same boredom. The only entertainment were films on TV. They did not have access to computers. When the time was good, they would often work in school greenhouses – cultivating tomatoes, cucumbers, carrots that were used by the staff to make various canned food for the children.

Dumitru’s mother says that if she could turn the time backwards, no authority would ever be able to convince her take her boy to a special school, and that she would knock on the doors of all institutions in her area till she found a suitable one for her child.

More than a year ago Dumitru returned home, among the dearest ones, and is now trying to recover the years he has been living away from family. The family receives support from the specialists of the social assistance department and from the teachers of the high school that the boy attends.

A friendly and thoughtful nature, Dumitru integrated rather quickly into the community school. He does quite well at school, but he knows that he can always count on his best friend in his form – Mihai, and on his support teacher.

It’s most difficult for him to do at math, but other subject also cause much trouble to him. Every grade 7 of 8 that Dumitru gets is a true holiday for the whole family. The mother dreams that the boy learns a foreign language, as she believes this will always be a secure source of income for him.

Dumitru’s plans, however, are far from intellectual work. The boy dreams of becoming a carpenter or a woodworker, and even started learning elements of this vocation.

He is proud to show his first attempts. He heard from other children that this is a good job, and that “a good carpenter will never stay hungry”. Thus, all his free time after finishing the homework and housework, Dumitru spends improving his craftwork sitting in a corner of the room and trying to produce something from wood.

