



Fewer children in residential schools

Four residential institutions were closed in 2012. According to the data of the Ministry of Education, special residential school of Calarasi town and Marcules-ti village (Floresti raion), and residential school for orphans and children without parental care in Cazanesti village (Tele- nesti raion) and Napadova village (Flo- resti raion), were closed this year.

In the beginning of the residen- tial system reform (2007), about 11500 children were placed in 67 residential institutions that existed at that moment. Their number dropped almost by half within the recent five years.

According to Mr. Valentin Crudu, Head of Ministry of Education's Gen- eral Department of pre-school, primary, and secondary mainstream education, 907 children were deinstitutionalized between 2007 and 2012. 777 of them were reintegrated into birth and exten- ded families, and 130 were placed into substitute family-type services.

Between 2007 and 2012 14 residen- tial institutions were dissolved, two of them were reorganized. In the following three years, other 23 residential schools will be reorganized.

Development of social services ensures the success of the reform

The development of alternative services is of major impor- tance in the context of the residential system reform. Falesti, Ungeni, and Calarasi, the three pilot raions of the project "Ensuring the right of the

child to a family and his protection from violence, abuse, and neglect" evolved significantly in the creation of an integrated social services sys- tem for the child and the family.

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The Regulation of retargeting financial resources was approved within the residential institutions reform

On 23 May, the Government approved the Regulation of retargeting financial resources within the residential institutions reform.

Depute prime-minister Mihai Moldovanu said that the document determines the mechanism of retargeting financial resources in the process of reforming residential institutions, and provides a minimum package of social services and inclusive education services to beneficiaries. The target of such services are children and young persons with disabilities, with special educational needs, those in difficulty, etc.

“The regulation provides reallocation of budget sources from residential institutions to new services, and confirms once again respectful attitude of the Government towards meeting the child’s best interest”, mentioned depute prime minister.

The Regulation stipulates the minimum package of social services that includes the center of social assistance of the family and the child, family support, foster care, family-type services, placement service, personal assistance, mobile team, etc.

According to the data of the Ministry of Education, the implementation of the National Strategy and Actions Plan of the residential childcare system reform 2007-2012 resulted in the closure of 11 residential institutions subordinated to the Ministry of Education. About 300 children from auxiliary residential schools were deinstitutionalized and integrated into biological or extended families, or placed into substitute family-type services.

In parallel, at raion and community level, new social services for orphans



and children without parental care were created with the support of donors and NGOs.

According to the stipulations of the regulation, retargeting of financial resources starts once the moratorium to new placements of beneficiaries into the institution is established, and the number of beneficiaries in the institution reduces. This retargeting process lasts till the beginning of the process of the institution’s liquidation. Within the retargeting, the expenses for the beneficiaries enlisted in the residential institution reduce, while social assistance costs increase, under the principle “money follow the beneficiary”.

The amount of allocations for each deinstitutionalized child will be determined, according to the needs of the child and the family, based on the individual care plan.

Before the regulation was adopted, the resources planned for social services

for children were mainly targeted to residential institutions. Thus, the state used to spend enormous amounts to maintain a system that was far from meeting physical, educational, and emotional needs of the children without parental care – a system that was incapable of preparing children for life, social integration, and personal fulfillment.

Estimations show that today, the cost of raising a child in a residential institution can be up to 40 000 lei. At the same time, the direct costs per child in a residential institution are very modest, because the biggest part of a residential institution’s budget is spent on the maintenance of buildings and on salaries.

Raising a child in a residential institution requires a cost that is several times bigger than the amounts directed to community schools. The state allocates to these institutions circa 5.000 – 6.000 lei per child.

Development of social services ensures the success of the reform

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Tudor RADEANU,
*depute president of Ungheni raion,
Head of Social Assistance
and Family Protection Department*

Ungheni raion has a multitude of services dedicated to social protection of children in difficulty. One of these services that we are implementing since 2002 is foster care. For a decade of its existence, this service offered protective environment to hundreds of children. Beneficiaries of the service are children who lack temporarily or permanently a family environment, children whose needs cannot be met by the biological family, children who can become victims of various forms of violence, etc. The foster care applicants are approved by raion Commission for the protection of the child in difficulty (gate keeping commission).

Foster care provides multiple types of placement, such as short-term – for a period not exceeding 12 months; long-term – till the child becomes adult (18 years old); emergency placement – from 72 hours to one month).

In addition to this service, we've created family support. This is important, especially because it gives us the possibility to get involved and solve difficult situations, preventing thus entry of a family into crisis and the child's separation from parents. We intervene, including with providing financial support, preventing thus expenses that the government might have in the future if this child gets into residential system or an alternative social service. The family support service – covered entirely from the raion budget – provides for about 200 families per year. In this sense about 500 thousand lei is allocated.

Iraida BINZARI,
depute president of Falesti raion

Falesti raion is among the first raions in Moldova to create al-

ternative services for children left without parental care. There have been three residential institutions until recently in Falesti raion – two auxiliary (special) institutions for children with mental disabilities, and one residential school. The reform of these institutions would have been impossible without a social services system, because the children's reintegration into biological families was not possible in all cases. Around 60 children from these institutions now have families and attend school in their communities. In present the reform is implemented in Falesti residential school. In the beginning of May this institution, having the capacity of 245 children, housed 50 children, 11 of whom are graduating this year. Other 10 children are being prepared for reintegration, and solutions are being sought for the remaining 29 pupils.

We wouldn't have managed to achieve deinstitutionalization of children in those three institutions, if a system of services for children and families in difficulty didn't exist in Falesti. Now a number of foster care services and social centers for children work in the raion. There are 8 family-type homes where 40 children are currently placed. Both services, the family-type home and foster care, are financially covered by the raion budget, in line with the existing legislation.

The raion center for the protection of the rights of the child provides family support service. Its main objective is to support families in order to prevent child institutionalization, and to reintegrate children from residential institutions into biological or extended families, or place them into family-type services.

Elena CHITOROAGA,
*main specialist in the protection
of families with children at risk,
Calarasi raion*

In Calarasi raion, the foster care service was launched in 2009. In present there are 12 foster care families here, with 19 children in placement, including 9 children from the auxiliary school that was open at the beginning of this year.

Another service, alternative to residential care, is family support. Its goal is to prevent child's separation from the family. With the support of Partnerships for Every Child, resources were allocated to support 148 families. In all cases, the money and the logistic support provided to the parents had the goal to prevent children's separation from their parents.

The foster care service is extending, and we plan to have 25 such services by the end of this year. It should be noted that all running costs of this service are fully covered by the raion budget.



Experts from 5 countries talked about modern practices of alternative care of children

Child protection experts from Great Britain, Ukraine, Russia, and Georgia participated on 24th May in the International Conference “Modern practices in alternative child care”, organized by the Ministry of Labor, Social Protection and Family, with the support of Partnerships for Every Child. International and regional good practices in foster care development were discussed at the conference particularly, and in the context of prevention/early intervention in situations when child and family enter difficulty, and in the process of deinstitutionalization of children.

Hugh Salmon, expert from Great Britain, said that it is very important that a child does not grow up in a brutal environment, abused and neglected by parents, because there is a risk that when he turns adult, he might abuse other people.

Stela Grigoras, director of Partnerships for Every Child, mentioned that the Republic of Moldova still has to work to create a system of alternative services for children in difficulty.

“We are moving a bit slow in this direction, because the local authorities are not prepared. It is a complex area, potential foster carers need to be selected very carefully. We need well-trained social assistants who would identify children with problems, abused children. If the authorities wish to invest in this area, this would be a benefit for the future generations”, said Stela Grigoras.

The conference was organized in the context of the child protection system reform that is being implemented in the country, focusing on the need to develop fostering in order to protect children left without parental care – a key service of the system based on family and community.

It offers a variety of placements in the family environment – emergency, respite, short-term, long-term placements, depending on the needs and situations of children.

Foster Care is a service, intermediary between the institution and the family, needed at community level. Its goal is to prevent institutionalization of children or reintegrate into biological families the children who are already in institutions. Depending on the reasons why children need fostering, it can last from a couple of weeks to several years.

The conference was organized within the project “Supporting Moldovan local public authorities in the provision of family-type alternative services to children left without parental care” implemented by Partnerships for every child in collaboration with the Ministry of Labor, Social Protection and Family, with the financial support of World Childhood Foundation.



Present at the event, depute prime-minister Mihai Moldovanu said that the Government does its best to make sure that the childcare system reform goes on. This year opening other 9 family-type homes and several specialized services for children in difficulty is planned.

In her turn, Mrs. Valentina Buliga, minister of Labor, Social Protection, and Family, said that this international conference was a platform to propose and discuss models of placement that are unified in the whole country. Valentina Buliga considers that for the Republic of Moldova, where the policy of social protection of abandoned or disabled children has been relying for years on residential institutions, alternative services

come to ensure the right of the child to a family, in line with international documents signed and ratified by the Republic of Moldova.

Valentina Buliga mentioned that foster care is key word in the context of the child care system reform. In Moldova, 11 raions already managed to implement this service, and the most frequent types of placement are short and long term. The minister considers that the Republic of Moldova needs all types of foster care placement. For example, emergency placement that is little practiced in our country, and respite placement for children with disabilities, helping their families to have a break and rest or time to solve various problems they face.



Partnerships for every child will continue the reforms started by EveryChild

The civil society is an opponent of the government, but to the greatest extent it is a partner. We will continue supporting this partnership to achieve, with joint efforts, objectives of national interest". This statement was made by the Parliament Speaker Marian Lupu at the ceremony of official inauguration of Partnerships for every child public association.

The Speaker greeted the launching of the new association, and mentioned that we are witnesses of the independent walk of a local project, which represents a process of evolution in the civil society.

Partnerships for every child association is successor or EveryChild Moldova that has been working for 15 years in the area of child's rights protection in the Republic of Moldova.

Stela Grigoras, director of Partnerships for every child said that the organization has managed during all this time to successfully implement numerous projects, to change for better the lives of many children, to contribute to the reform of child's rights protection in the Republic of Moldova.

Anna Feuchtwang, Executive director of EveryChild Great Britain appreciated that the number of children in residential care reduced twice, and that the legal fra-



mework of the family status was consolidated during this time,

Present at the event, Valentina Buliga, Minister of Labor, Social Protection and Family, mentioned that partnerships between the civil society and the state authorities play an important role in the social protection of child and family in difficulty.

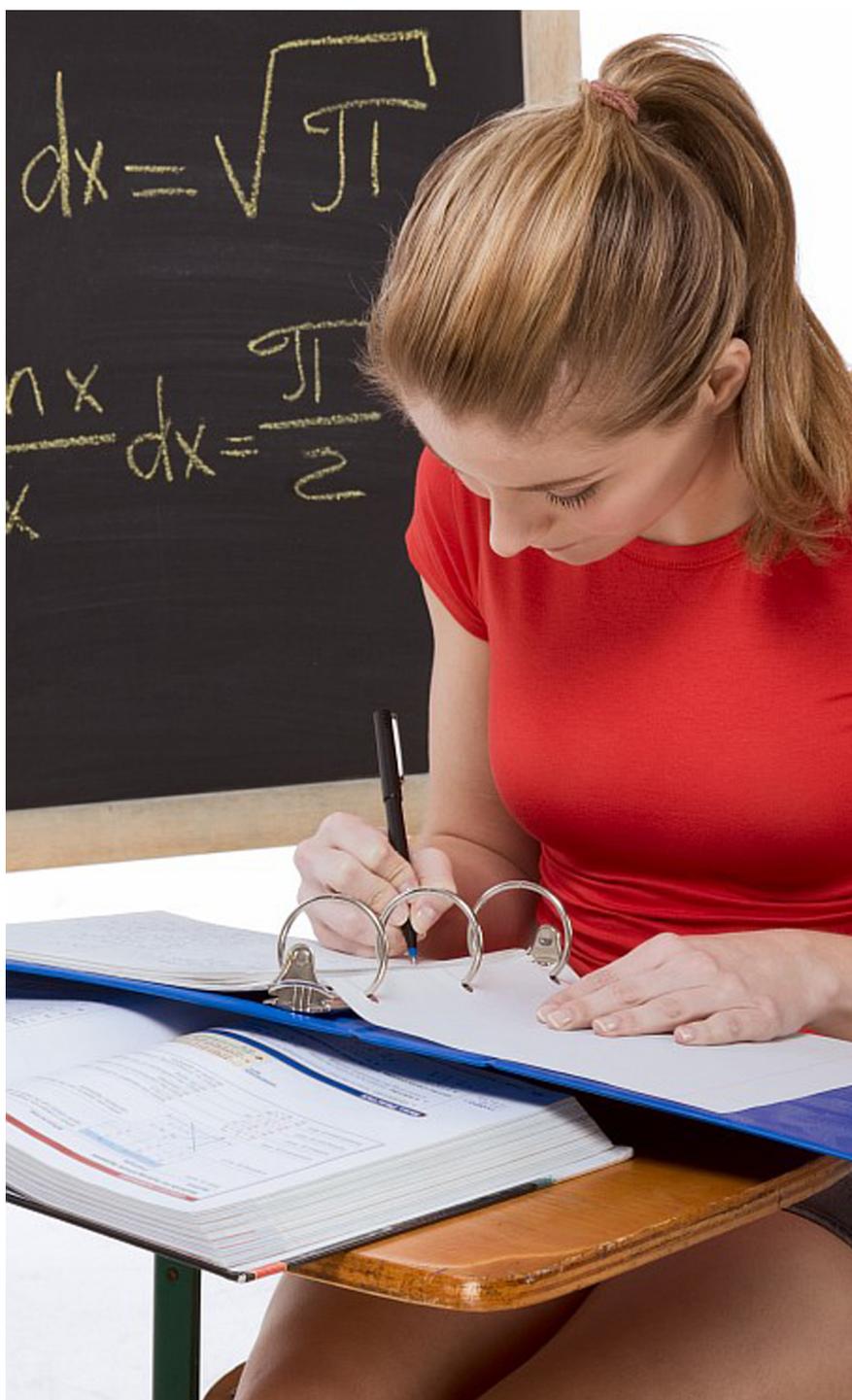
"In the turmoil of recent transformations, many children remained without parental care, and being placed into residential institutions, they don't know what parental affection and love is. The process of residential institutions transformation is being successfully implemented, to a great extent, due to the civil society that has come with new approaches and new attitude", mentioned Valentina Buliga.

Till present, due to EveryChild, 10 new governmental policies have been developed and approved. About 10 000 children escaped separation from family due to the intervention of this organization. With the support of EveryChild, every other residential institution from the Republic of Moldova was reorganized. Thus, 10 out of the 20 institutions included into the reorganization process in 2007 were covered by this organization. Four schools for children with special needs were closed, while tens of alternative services were created.

The organization has collaborated with local authorities from 26 raions, to develop social services that allow children live live with their parents and extended families, instead of being placed into residential care.

Children with special educational needs will sit for graduation exams with individual tests

For the first time in the Republic of Moldova, about 40 secondary school-leavers with special educational needs, will take their school-leaving exams based on individual tests – says a press-release of the Ministry of Education.



The tests were developed, according to individual educational program (IEP) that was delivered to the pupils. All beneficiaries of this projects were included into compulsory general education at the beginning of this school year. The pupils studied school disciplines according to the curriculum that was adapted or modified to help them sit for graduation exams in specific conditions.

To train management and psychopedagogical assistant staff who provide services to children with special educational needs, the Ministry of Education organized a seminar on the assessment and certification of pupils with SEN enlisted in mainstream schools.

The participants discussed at the seminar about the legal, normative, and methodological framework of educational assistance to SEN pupils, specific procedures of final evaluation tools development for SEN pupils, methodology notes of the evaluation and certification of SEN pupils, writing of evaluation tests for pupils who studied on the basis of IEP.

Valentin Crudu, Head of General Department of preschool, primary, and secondary mainstream education of the Ministry of Education, talked about the actions taken by the ministry to ensure equality of chances to SEN pupils.

The evaluation procedures for SEN pupils includes extension of the time for test completion, editing of tests with bigger character fonts than usual tests, written exam submitted on the computer, when necessary, sitting for the exams at home, etc.

According to Valentin Crudu, all SEN school-leavers will be given secondary education certificates with special series endorsement. These documents will allow them pursue education in vocational and specialized secondary education institutions.

The initiative was launched by the Ministry of Education in partnership with NGOs in the area, based on the Inclusive Education Development Program in the Republic of Moldova for years 2011-2020, for the purpose of ensuring the quality of inclusive education in mainstream educational institutions.



Falesti authorities developed a new child protection strategy

Falesti raion authorities developed an inter-agency strategy for the protection of the child and the family. The document aims at preventing abuse, neglect, violence, exploitation, and trafficking of children.

According to Mrs. Iraida Binzari, deputy president of Falesti raion, the strategy development was determined by the residential system reform process and the need for the specialists to collaborate in each case of abuse and neglect.

“In the process of child deinstitutionalization, gate-keeping, and closure of residential institutions in Falesti raion, we concluded that the actions of the social assistants alone are not sufficient to obtain the desired results. It was absolutely neces-

sary that the social assistants collaborate with educational, health-care, law-enforcement, first and second level local public authorities structures”, said Mrs. Binzari.

“The social protection system of Moldova is dominated by a reactive attitude – it involves only when a problem appears, and the effort is invested in solving the problem, rather than preventing it...”

The strategy was developed by a work group created by the decision of the president of the raion, for the purpose of developing a cooperation mechanism between structures in-charge with child protection.

The strategy contains a clear mechanism regulating the cooperation between specialists of various areas.

“The social protection system of Moldova is dominated by a reactive attitude – it involves only when a problem appears, and the effort is invested in solving the problem, rather than preventing it. With this strategy we intend to transit from reactive acts to early intervention”, said Mrs. Iraida Binzari.

Irina is back home

Irina is 11 and is 4th form pupil. She studied in auxiliary school for children with special needs for 2 years. The girl was placed there because of poor school performance.

Irina came home last summer, to live together with her parents, to stay close to her friends. Her school inclusion is slow, though. And it's not only about the age that makes her different from other pupils. Two years the girl spent in the residential school for children with special needs undermined her confidence in her own forces. Although she attended individual training courses at the special school, the results are not visible. On the contrary, the curriculum of the residential school held her back from the education level of her mainstream school peers. Now, in the community school, Irina has to study subjects that have been completely unknown to her. Her difficulty is intensified by the poor financial situation of her family.

Despite all difficulties, Irina does her best to study. She always does her homework, is active during classes, just like other children, but she still has lower grades. Teachers do not treat her specially, not to stress the difference between her and other pupils. Irina is aware that in order to cover her school debts she accumulated in the auxiliary school, she has to work very much, and that everything now depends on her.

Irina's placement into the auxiliary school was made upon the insistence of the school headmaster, who considered that the girl wouldn't be able to cope with the curriculum of a mainstream school.

While in the institution, the girl could see her parents only on holidays. The girl's family was replaced by her classmates and teachers. The only close person there was her sister, Dorina. The last time the girls came to visit home was last summer holidays.

Initially, when the parents were told about the reintegration program, nobody was very enthusiastic. The girls got used to their life in the institution, and didn't want to give it up, while the parents were concerned with the children's future.

The mother's concern can be explained. The girls were supported in the scho-

ol – they were provided with clothes and food, while the parents could give them nothing but a roof over the children's heads – and the house itself needed to be repaired. None of the parents worked, and they didn't really know the school material the girls were going to study. Irina even

Irina feels now a fulfilled child. The parents found jobs, her mother tries to help her with the homework. In her turn, the teen-ager helps her mother with housework, telling her about her life in the residential school.

started to think she had health problems and she wouldn't be able to cover ordinary school program.

Nevertheless, helped by the specialists, the family overcame these problems. Irina feels now a fulfilled child. The parents found jobs, her mother tries to help her with the homework. In her turn, the teen-ager helps her mother with housework, telling her about her life in the residential school.

The reintegration service that was provided to Irina's family hasn't solved their financial problems, although both parents started to work and the family is provided social payment. After a 2 years' separation, the girls are back home, in the family, close to the dearest ones.

