The child and the family

YOU BUILD THE FUTURE!
Together we will make it

Jon BARRETT
EveryChild TACIS
Project Team Leader

The project "Capacity Building in Social Policy Reform in Moldova" was initiated at the request of the Government of Moldova in conjunction with the European Commission. The major elements that underpinned the implementation of this project were: development of policies and practices in the field of childcare.

The success of this work has depended on the commitment of the Presidency and the Government of Moldova toward the fulfilment of EU requirements and has relied heavily on the working cooperation of its ministries of Health and Social Protection, the Ministry of Finance as well as the Ministry of Education.

The EveryChild Consortium, during the implementation of the Project, has promoted the interests of children, by reflecting this commitment to working in partnership with actors and beneficiaries. Thereby engendering local ownership at all levels, while facilitating inter-agency cooperation at the same time as recognising the impact of the project on the heavy workloads of officials in the Ministries and the Raions. Throughout we have based our efforts on three central pillars of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, to which Moldova is signatory. These are:

• *Children have a right to grow up in a family;*
• *Parents have a responsibility to raise and support their own children; and*
• *Government has a responsibility to support parents to care for their own children.*

Moldova, as many other countries, has limited available resources and therefore needs to target these effectively if it is to meet the needs of the most vulnerable members of the society. Therefore a system which is designed to provide only to those who meet tightly specified eligibility criteria will ensure the most effective use of those scarce and limited resources, this applies to both benefits and services.

Work is already underway to realise these reforms and as we talk here of our achievements to date, new aims and objectives as a result of this are emerging. That is the nature of development and our work. As society changes so must we to reflect the nature of that change. This is central to any development process, if the work we have done is to be meaningful and lasting.

I believe this has been a central part of the Project "Capacity Building in Social Policy Reform", but the measure of its impact will not be reflected by me nor the implementation team itself. It will be reflected in the achievements made by the project's partners in the Government and its Ministries, the NGOs, as well as in the Raion councils of Moldova in the interests of future generations - the children of Moldova.

Stela GRIGORAS,
EveryChild Moldova Country
Director

Even though the Capacity Building of the Social Policy Reform Project ended, EveryChild continues its activities in the Republic of Moldova in the way it's been carrying them out for over 10 years. The activities of our organisation will be focused further on the reduction of the number of children in residential institutions by developing community social services based on the principle of children's upbringing in a safe family-type environment. We will continue the good things accomplished by our team during the last years in partnership with our partners both from Central and Local Government. The appreciations of the results are different as well as people are different. However, we understood one thing – there is a moral power, creative spirit and financial capital in Moldova to bring the light and human warmth back to the hearts of thousands of Moldovan children. This is the supreme incentive that guides us and our colleagues. Together we will make it happen.

PROJECT ACHIEVEMENTS

During the three years of activity technical assistance was provided for:

(1) improvement of legal framework in the field of child protection; of secondary legislation for service implementation, improvement of service provision standards and quality;

(2) establishment of flexible financial mechanisms to enable development of community-based social services and targheted provision of services in the context of observing the principle – the money follows the child;

(3) support of families and children by implementing community-based services, etc.

The outcomes are:

■ development of four social services focused on the growth of the child in the family in the pilot sites Cahul, Orhei and Ungheni and their dissemination in 50% of raions;

■ development and approval by local Councils and by the MoHSP of the following acts:

✔ regulations on the Raion Commission for Protection of the Child in Difficulty – independent and effective gate-keeping system implemented in the pilot sites;

✔ regulations on Foster Care Service;

✔ regulations of the Family Support and Reintegration Service;

■ assessment of residential institutions in the pilot sites and development and implementation of a local strategy for the reorganisation of the child protection system at local level;

■ support and development of the National Action Plan on the reorganisation of the residential care system;

■ development of policies for the redirection of funds from the residential sector to the family;

■ in-service training and re-training of 450 specialists in the system;

■ establishment of the National Training and Resource Centre for the promotion of best practice and creation of a team of national trainers in the field, development of the Strategy and Curriculum for the development of national training and re-training of the staff approved in social assistance, etc.

It is worth mentioning that the project's activities have been supported by a social campaign: "Call the Future Home", which aimed at raising public awareness regarding the need to bring up the child in the family and the damaging effects of the institutionalisation. The media products promoted the community-based social services for children and families enhancing authorities and communities to use institutionalisation of children only as the last protection measure. The promoted messages focused on the need to reform the child protection system, particularly, on improving the institutional framework a multi-agency and integrated approach to children's needs, development of family support systems for children and families in difficulty and modernisation and reorganisation of childcare residential system.

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One of the last events organised within the "Capacity Building in Social Policy Reform" Project was the International Conference "National and International Perspectives in Childcare Social Policy Reform" held on 26-27th October in the Leogrand Hotel & Convention Centres.

The event aimed at promoting different experiences developed at local, regional and international level in the reorganisation of the social childcare system and gathered participants from the Czech Republic, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Romania, Russia, UK, USA and Ukraine. In addition, the results of "Capacity Building in Social Policy Reform" project were presented at the Conference as viable models in social policy reform in line with international developments. Bearing in mind the importance of this event, as well as the increased interest towards the considered subjects, in this issue of the magazine we will publish the materials of some famous professionals in child protection from Moldova and from abroad.

It should be mentioned that a Children's Conference was organised in parallel, that aimed at enhancinge children,s involvement in the decision making process. The children's participation programme started on 13th October and included visits to structures responsible for child protection, for services provided by the state and voluntary sector. On 27th October, in the plenary session, children expressed their opinions and made recommendations regarding the problems of children in the country and ways to address them. The opinions of participants in this conference and their recommendations addressed to adults can be found in this issue of the magazine.

Victor MINDRU,
Vice-Minister of Health and Social Protection

The legal framework must follow the social policy directions and principles

In the vision of the Ministry of Health and Social Protection it is necessary to reorganise the social assistance system based on several priority directions:

- **Legislative framework** that would facilitate and regulate social policy in the field

- **Institutional framework** that would coordinate and monitor the implementation of social policies

- **Financial framework** that would make better use of the resources existing in the system

- **Human resources,** able to provide qualitative social assistance services in partnership with other line organisation and in collaboration with civil society.

Legislative framework is developed based on international instruments, namely
- European Social Chart,
- European Convention for Social Security and the additional Agreement for its application,
- European Social Security Code
- Agreement on Partnership and Cooperation between the Republic of Moldova and the European Union
- UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

The international acts served as a basis in the development of Moldovan national strategies in the field:

- *The strategy for the reform of the social assistance system;*

- *Millennium Development Goals;*

- *Economic Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper;*

- *Action Plan RM – EU;*

- *National Strategy on Children's Rights Protection.*

The legal framework aims at implementing the strategic objectives

Law on Social Assistance;

Law on the Protection of Child's Rights;

Law on Social Protection of Certain Categories of Population;

Law on State Social Allowances for Sertain Categories of Population.

The legal framework must follow the social policy directions and principles. The following principles taken from the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child are very clearly applied in the field of child and family social protection:

The right of the child to a family

Family's responsibility to raise and bring up their own children

The responsibility of the state to support the family

The reform of the social assistance system in the Republic of Moldova reflects the intention of the Government to increase the level of inclusion of the most vulnerable groups of population in social assistance programmes and to improve their access to social services. In this context, the reform of the social assistance system has the following objectives:

- **Unification and harmonisation of the legislative framework;**
- **Improvement of the social allowance system by directing social benefits to the most vulnerable categories of population;**
- **Development of the social service, system by diversifying and improving the quality of social assistance services;**
- **Development and implementation of specific programmes, such as child and family protection, protection of persons with disabilities;**
- **Development of minimum quality standards for all kinds of services;**
- **Active involvement of NGOs in the reform process of the social assistance system.**

Re-direction of funds to the most vulnerable families

It is important that these principles are followed in the process of service provision.

Based on the existing gaps in the Social Assistance System we believe it is necessary to develop a national and territorial structure for coordination and monitoring of child and family social protection with the following components of:
- assessment and monitoring
- accreditation and approval of social services
- testing of professional competences
- development of family policies and equal opportunities

According to the current system of child's needs assessment, about 48% of children get in residential institutions upon parents' request. To improve this situasion, an efficient Gate-keeping system at large scale must be developed.

There are no eligibility criteria and needs' assessment procedures, agreed at national level to identify the applied protection measure that would meet the child's best interest. Most often the community does not have alternative services to support the child and family in difficulty. In this context, it is interesting to see the experience of EveryChildTACIS project that developed and piloted a gate-keeping system. MoHSP approved the Regulations of the Commission for Protection of the Child in Difficulty which is a component of the Gate-keeping system.

It is necessary to develop enough normative acts that will regulate the provision of existing and newly developed social services, since Moldovan NGOs developed a large number of services but these services are provided with no accreditation or quality assessment. The specialists in the system of social protection, such as social assistants and social workers, also need to be attested, but we do not have the attestation criteria or a Commission for Attestation of Professional Competences.

The negative phenomena that have an increasingly bigger impact on family integrity and psycho-emotional capacity of family members are: domestic violence, human trafficking and women's discrimination. Our state will develop policies in social protection to prevent and fight against these phenomena, for the protection and assistance of victims of these phenomena. All these actions have to be fulfilled within a structure with clearly assigned competences.

The objective of human resource development can be implemented by taking over the National Training and Resource Centre created within TACIS Project subordinating it to the MoHSP. The human resource development strategy will stipulate the criteria for identification of the number, type and staff competence level for the developed services. In this context it will be necessary to develop a Training Programme that will take into account the competences needed to fulfil the functions within the provided services. It is also important to create a structure for attestation of social assistants and social workers with a view to ensure qualitative services.

In order to accomplish the objectives within the social assistance system reform, it is necessary to develop a Network of social assistants at mayoralty level. Here we are at the negotiation stage with foreign donors to support Moldovan Government to employ social assistants at mayoralty level, at the beginning, so that the State Budget takes over their maintenance in the future.

The development of the social assistants' national network aims at building capacities of territorial-administrative units of Moldova Republic: mayoralties and raions, as well as of the Ministry of Health and Social Protection in the process of policy development and provision and monitoring of social assistance services in rural and urban communities.

Specific objectives of social assistants' network development

■ Identification of the most vulnerable families and persons at risk in all rural and urban communities and assessment of their needs;

■ Fulfilment of needs of families and persons at risk;

■ Development of a national monitoring system of the most vulnerable persons, families and social groups;

■ Development of a framework of social assistants' network management.

The national social assistance system consists of
1. Social benefits – financial assets oriented towards supporting families with children in difficulty
2. Social services – complex set of measures and actions undertaken in order to overcome difficult situations.

Often social services are more efficient than the financial support provided to the child and family. The current system of social services is poorly developed and mainly focused on residential childcare. But the placement of the child in the institution does not solve his/her problems; when the child returns to the community the problems double and often are not solved at all due to the fact that the period in the child's life when it was possible to influence the development of child's personality was missed.

That is why, it is necessary to develop alternative family-type child care services. Starting with 01.01.2006 the MoHSP ensured the sustainability of 3 centres for children providing alternative services: „Speranta" (Hope) city of Criuleni, „Пламьче» city of Taraclia, "AZIMUT" city of Soroca.

These are the first experiences, but the demonstrated positive practice shall serve as basis for the extension of these experiences throughout the country.

Within healthcare institutions, disabled children, children with neuro-psychical and neuro-motor disabilities benefit from balneo-sanatorium treatment.

Humanitarian aid and food in social canteens is provided for the material support of the population.

With the support of "Capacity Building in Social Policy Reform" Project the following services were developed in 3 pilot sites Orhei, Ungheni and Cahul:
– *Gate-keeping system*
– *Foster care service*
– *Family support and reintegration or integration of children from residential institutions*

The MoSPS supported these initiatives through approval of regulations on the provision of these services at the sitting of the Ministerial College. Currently, the possibility to expand these services nationally is being discussed.

In order to carry on the Reform, it is essential to raise public awareness, so that the communities realize the need of reform that will lead to social integration and reintegration of children and family.

Consequently, informing communities about the aims of reform, organising meetings to inform representatives of Local Public Administration, of the voluntary and private sector, opinion leaders (mayor, priest, school director, family doctor, economic entities, police authorities, mass media representatives, etc.), organising meetings to inform and train the staff of social establishments shall contribute to assuming the commitment of communities to continue the implementation of the reforme.

Ian SPARKS, EveryChild UK

Reform initiatives:
"Every Child Matters" in England and "Every Child Grows Up in a Family" in Moldova

Every Child Matters (which should not be confused with the NGO EveryChild) is a major initiative by the government in England to improve the services provided for children. The government decided a few years ago that all services for children should be located in the Ministry for Education. Previously services had been split between the Ministries for Health, Education and the Interior. Some people were worried that the Ministry for Education would not give enough thought to children in care and children in need and the Every Child Matters initiative was set up partly to answer this worry.

Every Child Matters is concerned with all children from birth to 19 years of age. The programme is concerned with the well-being of children and not just the problems they might face. It is based on five themes which were identified by children themselves. These themes are:

• Being healthy which covers physical, emotional and sexual health and general lifestyle issues such as not taking illegal drugs.

• Staying safe which is concerned with safety from neglect, abuse, bullying and crime but also safety from accidents in the home or on the roads.

• Enjoy and achieve which focuses on education, personal development and recreation.

• Make a positive contribution which is concerned with law-abiding behaviour, positive relationships and self-confidence.

• Achieve economic well-being which deals with further education or training, freedom from poverty and living in decent homes and communities.

Every Child Matters is an ambitious programme with hundreds of initiatives contained within its overall themes but these initiatives can probably be summarised under four headings:

1. IMPROVING SERVICES FOR ALL CHILDREN

Traditionally there has been a split between services which are for all children such as education and services for children in need such as family support and foster care. One of the effects of this split has been that children in care tend to do badly at public exams and that too many of the boys end up homeless and without work while many girls become pregnant in their teenage years and some drift into prostitution.

Every Child Matters recognises that all children have similar needs and it is better if services are delivered to all children.

2. MORE EMPHASIS ON INTERVENING EARLY AND PREVENTING PROBLEMS

One of the biggest initiatives within Every Child Matters has been Sure Start. This is a programme for children under 5 and their parents. The aim is to help prepare children for school through play activities and early years' education while at the same time supporting their parents with parenthood education and support in bringing up their children. Each Sure Start centre is located in a small neighbourhood and the aim is to have more than 85% of the children in that neighbourhood involved

in the Sure Start centre in some way. The centres are popular with families because they do not discriminate between good and bad families and because parents get the help they want. The government's target is to have 3,500 of these centres by 2010.

3. BRINGING SERVICES TOGETHER IN ONE PLACE

There have been a number of attempts to bring services together but parents still find themselves going to the child's school about education problems, to social services about family problem and to a health centre about physical problems.

The government is now attempting to make the local school the focus of all local services because all families with children will use the school at some time. There are two aspects to this.

The first is what is called the extended school. This means that the school will offer breakfast before school, study support after school, childcare both before and after school, support to parents during the term and activities such as sports for the whole community during holidays.

The second is placing other services in schools so that social services, health services, the police and youth services would all be represented in the school. This is a big challenge to schools that are used to concentrating solely on education but a few schools are leading the way and are very positive about the benefits.

4. BRINGING STATUTORY SERVICES TOGETHER AT MUNICIPAL LEVEL

This is the most ambitious change of all in Every Child Matters. Children's Trusts are being set up at municipal level under the direction of locally elected politicians to bring together all services for children at the local level. The municipality appoints a Director of Children's Services who is responsible for promoting joint planning of services, joint commissioning of the planned services from the NGO and private sector and a real integration of all the services. This covers children in care and children in need, schools, young offenders, youth and community services and the work of NGOs. It is also intended to include health services but this is proving the most difficult to achieve.

THE OUTCOMES FRAMEWORK

Every Child Matters is a complex programme and so the Ministry for Education decided to bring the main elements of the programme together on one sheet of paper. This is called the Outcomes Framework.

Although it looks complex it breaks down into five main elements:
  • Outcomes which are the five themes identified at the beginning of this paper.
  • Aims which explain the themes in more details.
  • Support which explains what parents and carers will do to support children.
  • Targets and Indicators which says how the success in achieving the Outcomes and Aims will be measured.
  • Evaluation criteria which says how the independent inspection services will judge progress.

Here is an example based on education which of course affects every child:
  OUTCOME: children enjoy and achieve
  AIM: children enjoy school
  SUPPORT: parent, carers and families support learning.
  TARGET: reduction in the number of days absent from school
  EVALUATION: action is taken to ensure education from five to sixteen is of good quality

Here is a second example, this time based on a case where a child may be going astray:
  OUTCOME: children make a positive contribution.
  AIM: children engage in law-abiding and positive behaviour.
  SUPPORT: parents, carers and families promote positive behaviour
  TARGETS: reduce the level of offending, reduce the number of crimes brought to Court, reduce the number of exclusions from school
  EVALUATION: prevent offending and reduce re-offending

EVERY CHILD GROWS UP IN A FAMILY

When I visited Moldova in November 2005 to work with the EveryChildTACIS project on de-institutionalisation it struck me that the Outcomes Framework would be useful for this work. There was already a lot of material in place on issues such as gate-keeping, referral processes and transitional costs. However it was difficult to keep all of this information in your mind at once and so I worked with the project team to develop something similar.

It is called "Every Child Grows up in a Family". (There is a copy at the end of this paper.) Unlike the Outcomes Framework it only has one goal – that every child should grow up in a family – but then it follows a similar model of principles, indicators and measures of success.

The overall principles are taken from the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and set out three balancing rights and responsibilities – the child's right to grow up in a family, the parents' responsibility to raise and support their own children, and the government's responsibility to support parents to care for their own children.

Most people now accept that children need to grow up in a family. But if this is to become a reality there have to be detailed and concrete plans to achieve this. So for example a principle of the framework is that government will do all it can to keep each child in a family. One of the indicators that this is being achieved will be that residential care is only used when all other options have been explored. This will only work if we achieve the target that gate-keeping is effective in every case.

Similarly there is a principle that legislation and regulations support the principle of children growing up in their own families. This is a good principle but it will only become reality if we achieve the indicator – a detailed Action Plan is set up to achieve this principle – and meet the target – a detailed plan to manage the transition to community services.

The President's commitment in 2006 to the principle of every child growing up in a family is a very powerful statement for all children and families in Moldova. However, it will only become a reality if politicians, policy-makers and workers in Moldova pick up the phrase of a famous English Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher. When people tried to persuade her to stop the radical changes taking place in England she would just say "There is no alternative".

The children of Moldova need people who, whenever obstacles are put in the way of every child growing up in a family, will say, firmly and repeatedly, there is no alternative.

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David LARTER,
EU Public Finance Expert

Financial aspects of the childcare system in Moldova

There are two themes to my presentation: examining the results of an analysis of spending from public funds on the residential care of children in Moldova in 2005 and the redirection of resources in a time of system reform.

In undertaking the finance analysis we used data for expenditures in 2005 provided to us by the Ministries of Education Youth and Sport, Health and Social Protection and Finance. I should like to begin by offering our thanks to colleagues in those Ministries for their help in making our work possible.

The context for this work is the President and Government's proposal to develop a new system of arrangements for child protection which will include reform of the residential care sector.

THE INSTITUTIONS
whose data we studied were:

Gymnasium Internats funded from the State budget	13
Gymnasium Internats funded from Local Authority Budgets	6
Special Schools funded from the State Budget	19
Special Schools funded from Local Authority Budgets	19
Sanatorium	1
Young Offenders Institution	1
Homes for Mentally Handicapped Children (Ministry of Health)	2
Baby Homes funded from the State budget	2
Baby Homes funded from a Local Public Authority Budget	1

A total of 64 institutions.

BASIC DATA

In 2005 the expenditure from public funds on residential care was 144,152, 000 Moldovan Lei.

12223 children attended or were accommodated in residential institutions.

The number of staff employed was 5805.

The sector also received 16,571,000 Moldovan lei in donations in 2005. This may be an underestimate because local public authorities either do not, or are not required to, report all their extra-budgetary resources.

SYSTEM CHARACTERISTICS

What does the analysis tell us characterises the present system of residential care
It is   *Costly;*
Poorly Managed;
Follows no consistent policy;
Occupies real estate which is costly to run
and poorly maintained;
Has no regular audits to ensure the efficient use
of resources

Next I should like to share some of our findings, findings which have contributed both to our conclusions about the nature of the present system and to the recommendations we make.

EXAMPLE 1. Gymnasium Internats
Of 4398 pupils attending Gymnasium Internats funded from the State budget 1174 (25%) go home every day. There is no justification for these children to be attending a residential school and all could be transferred to mainstream schools with no risk to their wellbeing.
The potential impact of such a transfer would be the equivalent of closing 3 and one half schools, releasing financial resources for redistribution into community education and social protection services of 11.789,000 Moldovan Lei.

EXAMPLE 2. Special Schools
It is remarkable to find a similar situation in the Special Schools. By definition children in Special Schools have a greater or lesser degree of disability and, therefore special needs. This is clearly not wholly true since here of 5371 pupils no less than 1268 (24%) go home every day.
Again, there is no justification for these pupils attending a residential school and, again they could be transferred to mainstream schools at no risk.
Special Schools accommodate fewer pupils per school than Gymnasia so that this time the potential is for the closure of 9 schools, while the in principle release of financial resources would be 14,784,000 Mdl.

EXAMPLE 3. State financed Baby Homes.
Given what we all know about the damage done to children who go into residential care and, more importantly what is now known about the immediacy with which small children fall behind in all developmental aspects it is difficult to justify the continued existence of institutions of this kind.

The costs per child in Baby Homes are among the highest in the country. In the State financed Baby Homes it is 36327 Moldovan Lei for each child. This is entirely the costs of caring for a child, there being no educational provision for infants. This figure, 36327 Moldovan Lei is enough to pay for 3 children in foster care. This includes the costs of the assessment process undertaken by a Social Assistant and an apportionment of the overhead costs of a Raion Social Assistance Department.

It is also true that the life experience of children placed with competent foster parents is infinitely preferable to any residential care. In terms both of outcomes for children and of costs, Baby Homes should disappear and be replaced by other forms of service. We think that these examples establish the points we make in the Report which you may read in full at your leisure, so I now want to turn to our recommendations,

RECOMMENDATIONS

• Reform of the residential sector should be based upon a presumption of closure of all existing establishments and of the provision of new services on alternative sites.

• Bearing in mind that consideration must be given to the needs of the wider community of children and not simply of those currently in residential care, any new service proposal should take account of local need.

• Most buildings are badly located, many are too large almost all are in poor condition and badly maintained. In our view reproviding in a high cost, ill adapted, location will inevitably result in a new form of waste. Existing real estate should be retained only when there is overwhelming evidence in favour of its retention.

• All assessments should include a rigorous institution by institution financial assessment and proposals for future provision should equally be rigorously evaluated. This last point about the financial evaluation of new proposals should take account of the costs of producing desired outcomes.

I shall have more to say about the dangers of underinvestment later on.

I would now like to turn to the redirection of resources. In this context redirection means the transfer of resources from the residential care sector to community based services for children in either social protection and/or improving community based education services.

Dependent upon how radical the Government is prepared to be in its reform of residential care the new services are likely to be sustainable from Moldova's own resources. The funds used by the residential care sector are broadly adequate to meet the running costs of new services

But the reform process also incurs significant transitional costs. These costs include, for example, the setting up costs and initial running costs for new services and the retraining costs of redeployed staff. We think that for this phase the Government will need help from international donors.

But before speaking about the transfer process itself I should like to draw attention to some things the Government could do in preparation for reform. There are three examples, but before that here is another slide:

This slide shows three sums of money:

16,571,000 Lei; Donations
11,789,000 Lei Gymnasium Internats and
**14,784,000 Lei, Special Schools**

Each of the three sums mentioned here is more than enough to meet the costs of the Government's original plans for developing a network of social assistants in 2007.

Now to return to preparatory suggestions.
- Firstly, noting the large sums of money donated to residential care homes Government could engage with donors to encourage such donations to be redirected toward community purposes.
- Next, we understand that the Government either wishes or intends to improve the salaries of teachers. There is already a considerable differential between teachers and educators in residential schools and teachers and social assistants working in the community. Anticipating the need to redeploy staff from the residential sector to community services, Government could begin to erode that differential by imposing a standstill on earnings in the residential sector and applying the increases only to community based teachers.
- Thirdly, Government has already set in train the development of a network of social assistants. The new services mean that the role and duties of social assistants will be greater and more complex than in the past. It will, in our view, be important that social assistants are adequately remunerated. Underinvestment by paying too little will result in four phenomena:
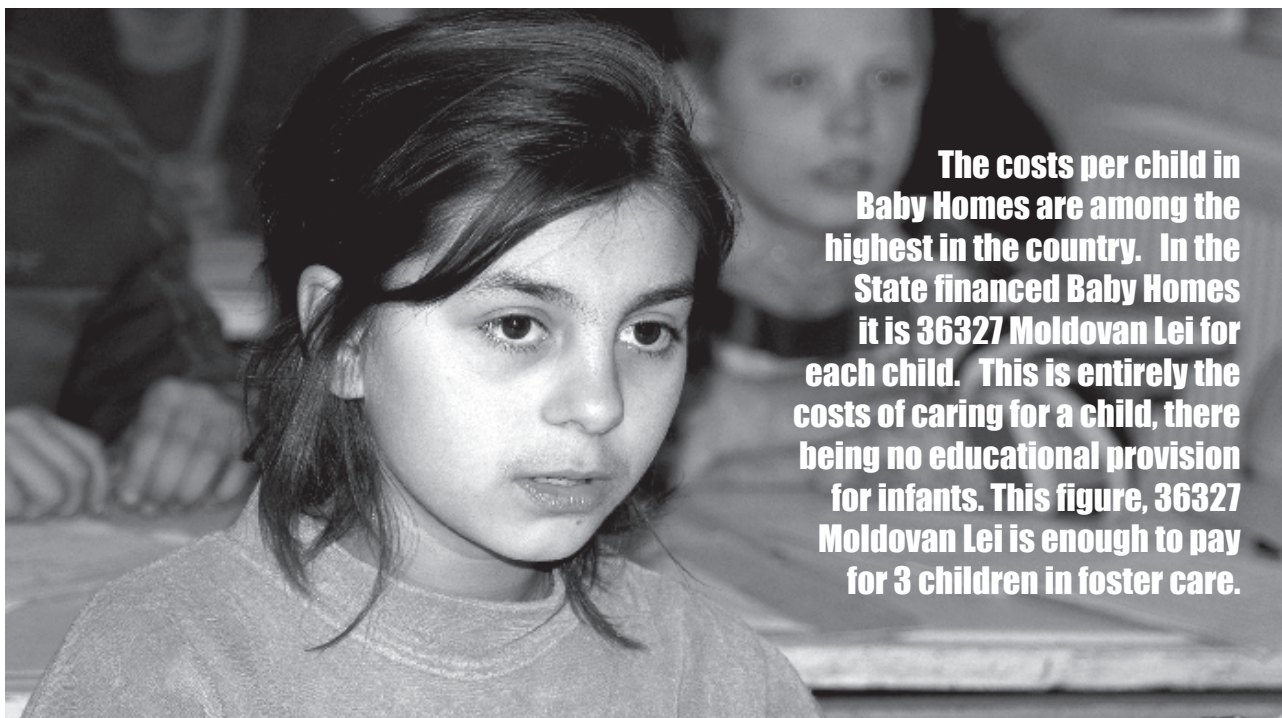
The costs per child in Baby Homes are among the highest in the country. In the State financed Baby Homes it is 36327 Moldovan Lei for each child. This is entirely the costs of caring for a child, there being no educational provision for infants. This figure, 36327 Moldovan Lei is enough to pay for 3 children in foster care.

- Difficulty in recruiting staff of sufficient basic ability;
- A permanently high vacancy factor,
- High staff turnover and, in consequence,
- Much higher training costs.

FINANCIAL PRUDENCE MEANS TWO THINGS AT LEAST – NOT INVESTING IN THE WRONG THINGS

INVESTING ENOUGH IN THE RIGHT THINGS TO MAKE SURE THEY ACHIEVE THEIR OBJECTIVES.

Back to the transfer of resources.

1. It is essential to the success of the reform process that public funds presently used for residential care must be safeguarded and reused only for community based child protection services and for the improvement of mainstream education.

2. A second principle, already embodied in the proposals for a new child protection system, is that services should be provided at local level, through the agency of Local Public Authorities.

3. Financial responsibility for the children placed in residential establishments should be transferred to Local Public Authorities – The principle of WHO DECIDES PAYS

4. The budgets of establishments being reformed must be clarified and fixed so that the volume of resources available for redistribution is clearly understood. At this stage it is of vital importance to control costs!

5. A moratorium on new admissions and a moratorium on the employment of new staff will be necessary.

6. It is important to calculate the share of residential costs borne by education and those borne by care so as to understand and decide the destination of released resources.

7. Next as children leave the residential institution financial resources need to be transferred to the Local Public Authority who will be responsible for them in the future (not necessarily the Local Public Authority in whose area the institution is situated, but the Local Public Authority where the child lives).

Arrangements for the transfer of resources from institutions financed by Local Public Authority budgets are similar in kind but will need to take account of future arrangements for those children who live in a different Raion

8. It may be necessary for Government to take powers requiring Local public Authorities to effect the reform.

9. Arrangements for transferring resources will need in one way or another to be authorized within the Annual Budget Law or by approved variations to that Law through the year as the reform process proceeds.

10. As institutions are reformed their unit costs will increase in the short term. As their budgets decline arrangements will need to be in place for the progressive redeployment of staff. New services will need to be able to absorb some displaced staff. This will in the short term incur double running costs and it is this which leads us to conclude that donor help will be needed for the period of transition.

IN SUMMARY

• Residential Care is expensive and ineffective and its radical reform is wholly justified.
• Current expenditure on residential care must be safeguarded.
• The money used to finance residential care is broadly adequate to support the new system of child protection.
• Donor help will be needed to cover transitional costs.
• Measures to prepare for reform are available and recommended.
• Financial responsibility for the care and education of children should be transferred to Local Public Authorities,
• Once the reform is begun there should be a moratorium on new admissions and the employment of new staff
• Money should be transferred to Local Public Authorities as children leave institutions to allow them both to educate the children in mainstream schools and to provide the care services that their community requires.

Finnally, I would like to thank our colleagues from the ministries involved in this analysis for their help in our activity.

A question I would wish to pose is if I was to come back to Moldova in 5 or 6 years will you be able to demonstrate that these changes have resulted in better outcomes for children? Will there be good quality, community based services in place? Will they be able to meet the needs of children and their families in a flexible cost effective way?

Eileen WADDINGTON,
Independent UK Consultant

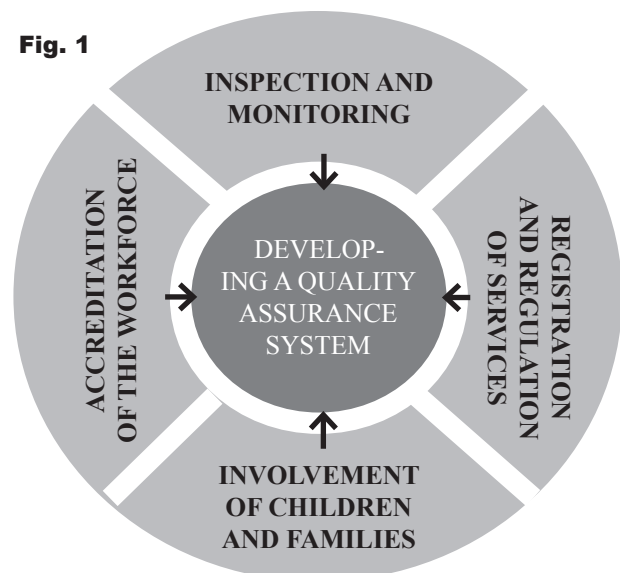# Quality is Everyone's Business:
Monitoring and inspection of social care services

AN INTRODUCTION TO QUALITY ASSURANCE

I want to suggest to you that structural changes alone do not result in better outcomes for children and a key part of any change management process needs to be ensuring that quality assurance systems and processes are put in place. Unfortunately there is a tendency for people to think that if inspection and monitoring systems are put in place then inspectors are the custodians of quality and others in child protection services can leave them to promote quality and deal with poor performance. Whilst inspection and monitoring systems and processes do have a very important role in ensuring that services perform to agreed standards, if real progress is to be made then a culture has to be developed where it is recognised that quality is everyone's business. People delivering services need to constantly ask themselves whether their practice is professional and whether they are acting in the best interests of the child; is the child's voice being heard? Those that organise and manage services need to ask themselves if the services that are funded are providing the support that children and families need; are children being kept apart from their parents unnecessarily? For those who set

the policies and allocate finance for services the questions are ones about how successful the policies are, and how are they improving the life chances of our children? Fig. 1 shows the key components of an effective quality assurance system. It highlights the need to ensure a quality workforce through the development

Fig. 1

INSPECTION AND MONITORING

ACCREDITATION OF THE WORKFORCE

DEVELOP-ING A QUALITY ASSURANCE SYSTEM

REGISTRATION AND REGULATION OF SERVICES

INVOLVEMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

13

of a rigorous accreditation process which involves registration and ongoing training opportunities; arrangements to register all services both state and NGO, requiring them to meet a required set of standards; an inspection and monitoring service which is independent and which can require that remedial action is taken when bad practice is identified, the ultimate sanction being the closure of the service. The fourth and arguably the most important contribution to promoting quality assurance is that children and their families are given a voice in determining standards and their measurement.

I have been asked to focus particularly on the role of inspection and monitoring so after that brief introduction to the wider quality assurance debate I would like to move on to consider the particular contribution of inspection and monitoring.

WHY IS INSPECTION AND MONITORING IMPORTANT?

It is important to individuals and their families because it can offer them protection from abuse and is a mechanism for ensuring that their needs are being met. Importantly, if the systems and processes are robust it can give them a voice in how they receive help.

For services, effective inspection and monitoring gives them independent feedback on their performance and helps them to set a developmental agenda where performance may not be up to standard. It can also provide a means of sharing good practice across services.

It has an important contribution to make at the level of national government, as inspection and monitoring makes explicit the standards of care expected and contributes to an evidence base concerning the quality and effectiveness of service delivery. In addition data collected can inform the monitoring of policy implementation and highlight structural and financial difficulties in implementation. Further more it allows for comparisons of performance within and across Raions, can inform judgements about value for money and the development and refinement of future social policy. The role of inspection and monitoring in the implementation of social policy is shown in Figure 2 below.
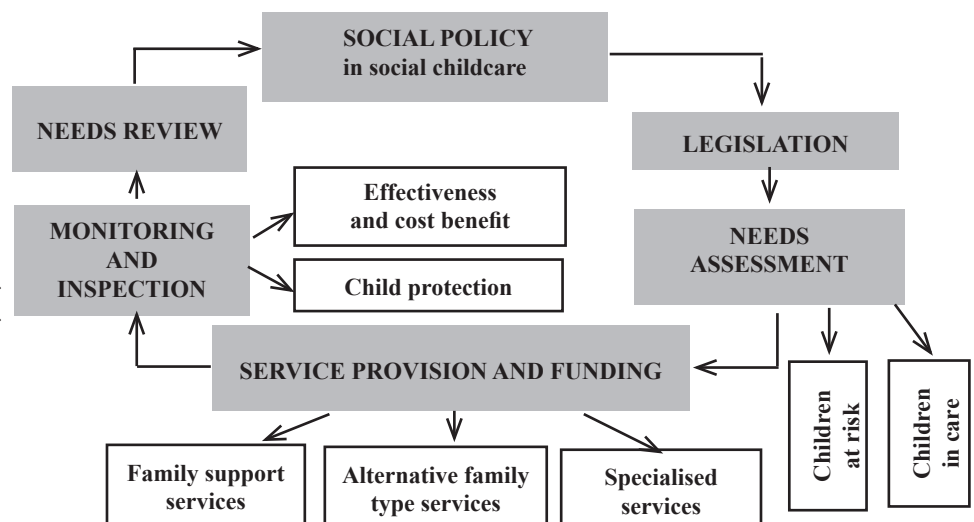
DEVELOPING EFFECTIVE AND APPROPRIATE STANDARDS

Quality standards are an important building block in establishing an effective monitoring system. It is against these standards that services are measured. As part of my work in Moldova I have facilitated a series of workshops to consider the setting of standards and their measurement. In one workshop I asked participants to identify the things that had the greatest impact on the lives of their children and were the things that would help their children to grow up into happy fulfilled adults. We identified the following list:

• Loving parents and siblings
• A comfortable home and personal space
• Opportunities to play and interact with other members of the family
• School and intellectual development
• Friends
• Feeling valued by others
• Independence
• Good Health
• Food and nourishment.

Fig. 2 **THE ROLE OF INSPECTION AND MONITORING IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SOCIAL POLICY**

If we feel these are the important ingredients for a happy childhood then these are the areas our standards must address. Unfortunately some of the current standards do not concentrate on issues of quality but rather place an unhelpful emphasis on quantitative measures.

CHARACTERISTICS OF AN EFFECTIVE INSPECTION AND MONITORING SYSTEM

In developing an inspection and monitoring system in Moldova I would like to suggest that international experience has shown that effective systems share a number of characteristics:

• They are fair and equitable and inspect both state and NGO provision.
• They are independent, which means they are free from political influence and are not linked to service provision.
• They involve children and families as part of the inspection process.
• They have staff that are skilled and understand the diversity of service provision.
• Sanctions exist including service closure where there is a persistent failure to improve.
• Mechanisms are in place to ensure inspection out puts influence policy review and development. In the case of Moldova it will be important that this extends across ministries.

The calibre of inspection staff will be particularly important and they will need to have sufficient status and remuneration to reflect the importance of the task. In many countries a formal registration process has been instituted for inspectors with training linked to a set of core competencies. In beginning to establish their inspection and monitoring system, Moldova may wish to consider some secondments of staff from existing services as a useful way of developing expertise and sharing costs.

MOVING FORWARD, MAKING PROGRESS

Introducing change in child protection services brings with it some risks (though arguably in Moldova, no change brings with it even greater risks), one way of managing these risks is to move forward now in developing an inspection and monitoring system. Such a system needs to be established as a national system with clearly defined powers and reporting mechanisms. Effective links will be required with Raions; a national body with local arms. The inspection function which is created will need to have enough independence to challenge the system, hold service providers and funders to account for the quality of their services. In order to do this the service will need to be able to:
• Visit services unannounced
• Look at files and other records and talk to staff
• Talk to children and parents alone and consider the record of complaints made and actions taken
• Have the power to investigate any instances of abuse
• The ability to recommend to Raions the closure of a service in the case of significant concerns.

In conclusion therefore what are we looking for the inspection and monitoring service to achieve? I would suggest that we should see them as an important building block in ensuring that we achieve better outcomes for children through the provision of appropriate, good quality support mechanisms for children and families Some of the out puts from the inspection process that can influence this would I suggest include:
• Reports for individual services on their performance, highlighting areas of good practice and areas where remedial action is necessary. Part of the process of inspection should be to agree a recovery or development plan where necessary.
• Reports to Raions on the performance of services in their area, providing comparisons and identifying emerging themes, possibly where training and development work is necessary or where an effective service might help and support one which is failing.
• Reports to Government on the quality of care of children in Moldova, identifying where efforts need to be targeted to make improvements and demonstrate progress on policy implementation. The inspection service will have an important role in developing an evidence base about what works in developing community services during this time of significant change.

I would like to take this opportunity to wish ministers, managers and service providers well in the task on which they have embarked. The children of Moldova deserve high quality support and the returns to the country if these can be provided, will be significant.

Myrna L. McNITT, IFCO, USA

Early infant brain development

Truly the development of the human is a wonder - a time of intensive energy, whose hallmark is that of exploration and constant learning: testing, mastering and developing communication. Childhood is a time to build relationships with parents, other family members, and eventually others away from family.

Unfortunately, there is the painful realization that millions of young children are growing up without a significant loving relationship. Their destiny has been that of being placed in orphanages away from the significant relationships which shape and stimulate their brains.

It was Russian born developmental psychologist, Urie Broffenbrenner, who described the world of the very young child. He stated that every child needs "one person who is unabashedly crazy about them." Babies without parental care born to circumstance in Eastern Europe have the same needs as those babies found in China, India, and Africa. They are abandoned to the street, left in hospital as boarder babies, or brought to the gates of children's homes in desperation. If placed in an orphanage they may survive, but they will not thrive. Their existence is one of deprivation- without the intensive love described by Broffenbrenner their brains will not develop. It is intensive love that fuels early infant brain development. If a baby is abandoned to an orphanage where the child minders must care for many babies, what will the child learn? The baby will learn that their world is cold and unresponsive. The baby will be deprived of care that nurtures attachment and subsequent cognitive development. Over 54

years ago Dr. Gesell and Cathrine Amatruda stated "Environmental impoverishment leads to behavioral impoverishment." They were describing the impact of poor stimulation on the development of the brain. Gesell goes on to conclude that the consequence of a child being raised in an environment of deprivation and without proper stimulation will be a child with a limited repertoire of appropriate behavior and emotional responses. They will struggle to cope with their worlds. This was born out in research in the 1990's when older children placed in Romanian orphanages as babies were then placed in family based care. Their cognitive skills began to catch up but their social skills lagged seriously behind.

The richness of the infant attaching to its caregiver is defined by the work of John Bowlby, Anna Freud and Rene Spitz. They have given us a clear picture of the destructiveness to the human spirit, when small babies lay in their cot without human contact. If babies reach out and no one responds those portions of the brain needing human contact to develop will not become wired to the world around it.

Spitz work in the 1950's is mirrored in practice today where very young children in residential care may be physically rescued from the brink of death, but their little souls are lost to a sea of other faces all reaching out for human contact. Spitz showed that nurturing is necessary for psychological development and in fact survival. In his work Spitz noted that children reared in hygienic institutional circumstances would lag far behind. For some of the babies raised in orphanages, their state of infantile depression- marasmus was so profound that they would turn their faces to the wall and die.

Ross A. Thompson in
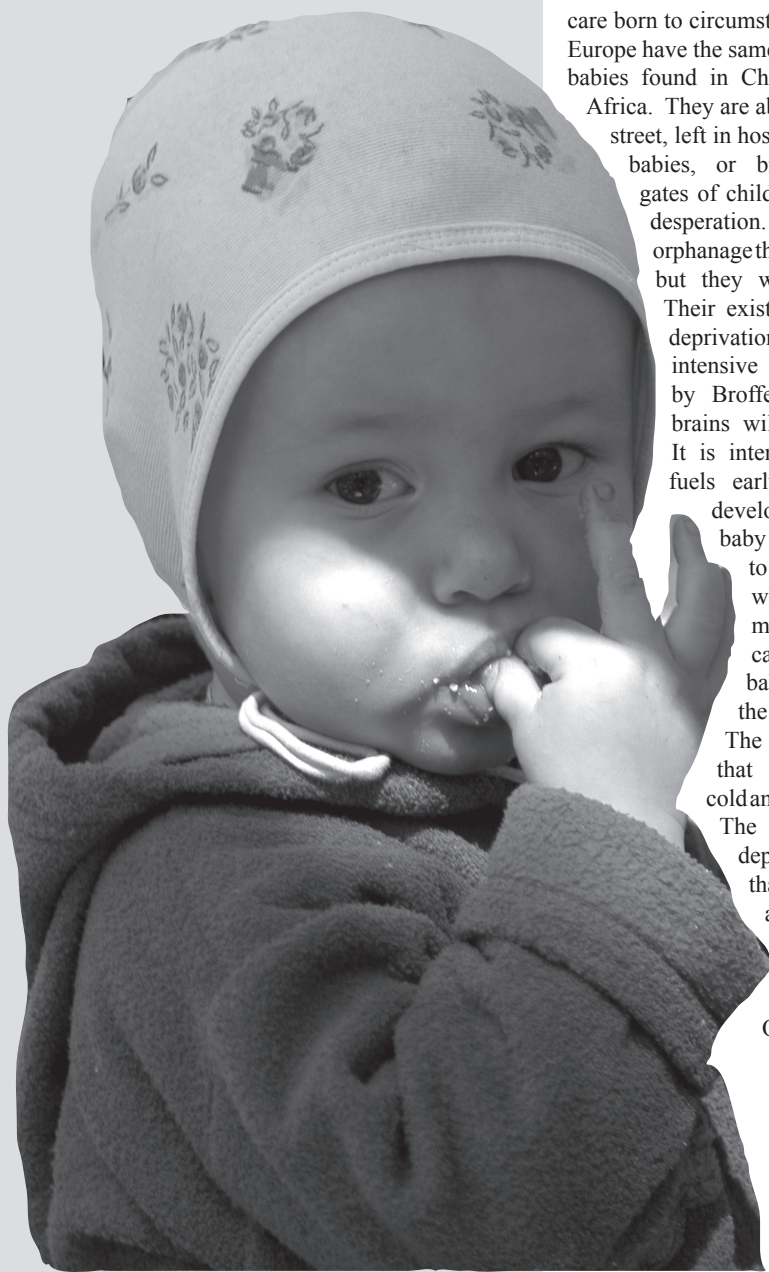
...Unfortunately, there is the painful realization that millions of young children are growing up without a significant loving relationship. Their destiny has been that of being placed in orphanages away from the significant relationships which shape and stimulate their brains...

the Future of Children summarizes the dilemma of early child development and survival. A drive to development is inborn, propelling the human infant toward learning and mastery. The opportunities for growth that enrich the early years also bring with them vulnerabilities to harm-consider the developmental risks of children raised in large orphanages. These risks insult the child's well-being. The child's brain once open to learning will begin to loose its neurological responsiveness. The experiences then that greet the infant in their human and physical surroundings can either enhance or inhibit the unfolding of the inborn potential of the child. Babies depend on interactions, both transactional between self and caregiver, as well as ecological between self and their world. The very young child is unable to protect themselves from harm, to call out for help and to know when their world is anything but normative. For their potential to develop they need a warm stimulating environment cradled in the arms of those who care.

The research of Myron Hofer makes this point- studying the impact of removal on baby rats from their mother, Hofer learned that removal set in train intensive responses-the baby rats within 24 hours after removal from the mother, had changes in growth hormones, heart rate, blood pressure, sleep patterns, sucking responses, and responsiveness to stimulation. This study reinforces the point that the give and take between caregiver and child counts. People and especially parents and other caregivers are the essence of the infant's environment, and their protection, nurturing, and stimulation will shape early development. The human correlation of Hofer's work is seen in studies of children reared in orphanages. These children are often smaller, with a smaller head circumference. As with the rats, children without parental care did not grow normally.

For the infant during the gestational period the mother is the environment. As early as twenty-five days after conception the neurological system is developing-the neural tube which will become the brain stem- leading to the spinal cord triggering the function of breathing, heart, swallowing, reflexes for sight and hearing, levels of alertness-the startle response, ability to sleep, and the future sense of balance in vestibular functioning are all developing. For nine months before birth in what is hoped is a protected and nurtured environment the 100 billion neurons or nerve cells, each shaped like a tree develop a root system of dendrites to receive messages from the world of the infant through synaptic responses, acting as a neurotransmitters. This synaptic activity is especially responsive after birth. At birth ten billion neurons or ten percent of the potential of the child is ready for stimulation. During the first year of life the brain will triple in size and by the end of the third year the 85% of the brain's capacity

for communication, movement, intelligence, and social and emotional connections has been developed. The more an area of the brain is activated, the more likely that the state of the brain will become a trait for the child. The brain is more than physiology. The connections made by the experience of emotion and learning, between the infant and caregiver, form the foundation for the child to continue the attaching behaviors rooted before birth.

Attachment is of course the basis for social conscience. For the child in utero she will develop preferences for sweet and sour from the amniotic fluid, she tastes her mother. During this same gestational time he will hear and recognize the voices of the mother and father; will be soothed by the rhythm of the mother or entrainment; and have diffused sight. After birth the distance a baby can see brings the baby into visual contact with the mother. This is a perfect line of vision to bring baby to breast or 10 to 18 inches. All of this is the beginning foundation of attachment.

The development of the brain is hierarchical from the primitive areas to the higher functioning found in the cortex. The brain is plastic and malleable. While some areas are fixed like the midbrain and brainstem the home of the autonomic system, the seat of emotion or attachment is more forgiving. Our babies made vulnerable by the world's inability to draw a cloak of protection around them are willing to forgive if we seize the window of opportunity to start over with them.

For typical development, the infant or young child needs the opportunity for positive stimulation by persons who love and are responsive to them. Dr. Myron Hufer calls these interactions "hidden regulators", that is the parental responsiveness to the cues of the baby. Conversely, an infant's exposure to violence may well develop a fear circuit resulting in an anxious child. For others the experience of neglect will cause areas of the brain to be compromised with a failure to develop higher level thinking. The neglect we are talking about are problems that seriously interrupt the child's development. It is the neglect that ignores the child's fundamental need for stimulation that gets the child's neural circuitry going. The child can be kept alive but the developmental structures needed by the child may be lost. Thus, the very young child exposed to violence and neglect without mediation will not develop the higher functioning portion of the brain leading to abstract functioning such as empathy, justice, pride, forgiveness, and security.

Dr. Bruce Perry, international expert on the impact of trauma on the developing child notes: "During the first three years of life, the brain organizes in a use dependent way, mirroring the pattern, quality, and quantity of the experiences of the infant. The root neurobiological structures for all future functioning are established in early childhood and provide the foundation for

more complex feeling and thinking, and behaving which develop during the rest of life. Roughly 85% of these core brain structures are 'organized' by age three. Chaos, neglect, and violence in early childhood result in disorganized and underdeveloped brains. Consistent nurturing, predictable and 'enriched' experiences in a safe setting result in optimal brain organization".

The very young child exposed to violence and neglect will have altered brain states because of stress. Change for the very young child needs sensitive responsiveness. Babies and toddlers live their world through their senses-tactical experiences, smell, sound, and tastes. When change occurs all these senses alert the child's brain to the change-arousing a fear state. Perry notes the disorganized development of the brain in children exposed to prolonged trauma. He further states that the lower level functioning area of the brain dominates, blocking the smooth development which leads to problem solving and emotional regulation. Dr. Perry described children of trauma as having altered brain development. Trauma and neglect cause the child to respond with fright, flight, or freeze. When this happens the child will need reparative opportunities to restructure the areas of the brain altered by trauma.

Dr. Megan Gunnar in research- that included children with families as well as children in out of home care- measured children's responsiveness to stress. She measured levels of the steroid hormone, cortisol, in the saliva of the children. Everyone produces cortisol-especially during certain parts of the day. Too much cortisol at the wrong time can have a toxic effect, and in extreme cases can even kill brain cells. Gunnar found that children who had warm, responsive care in their first year of life were less likely to respond to stress by producing an overload of cortisol. An overload of cortisol was seen by Gunnar in Romanian children in institutional care. They had high levels of this stress hormone, when levels in other children were predictably low. Thus, even when intervention and placement away from the family is needed for survival, the child will have acute reactions. The fear state will need to be replaced with new memories.

Technology has allowed us to look into the brain-PET-Positron Emission Tomography and MRI-Magnetic Resonance Imaging scans tell the story of development of the brain.

...The very young child is unable to protect themselves from harm, to call out for help and to know when their world is anything but normative. For their potential to develop they need a warm stimulating environment cradled in the arms of those who care.

Unfortunately the story has all too often been that of the brain of a child not nurtured and stimulated. PET scans show that the brain's emotional centers are already functioning in 1-week-old babies, according to pediatric neurologist Harry Chugani of Children's Hospital of Michigan in Detroit. Those brain regions specialize in recognizing faces and picking up emotional cues. Chugani also used scans to compare connective fibers in the brains of children never in orphanages with the brains of those adopted from Romanian orphanages where they received little attention. Adoptees from Romania had fewer fibers with weaker connections in their frontal cortexes.

His 1997 study of Romanian orphans brought to the public eye the legacy of inadequate child care. These children removed from institutions where they were not nurtured by caregivers and barely kept alive by inadequate nutrition were found to have "holes" in their brains. Using PET scans, Dr. Chugani traced the glucose activity in the brain. Glucose fuels the brain. The more active the brain is during a task the more glucose the brain uses. The PET scans of these children revealed an under utilization of the brain. This was contrasted to children that had healthy stimulation. Their brains were filed with glucose and showed optimal brain development. For the Romanian orphans areas of the brain were not developed- their brains looked like that of Alzheimer's patients. When we look in the faces of children living in orphanages-what do we see?

Our task is to maximize the opportunity for good beginnings. From the time of conception, in-fact through-out life, there are critical periods of learning. There are windows of opportunity-some wide and some narrow, during which the baby's experience will fatefully and permanently shape his mature mental skills. All critical periods begin in the first four years of life when the synaptic tide turns from waxing to waning in all brain areas. For example the plasticity of the auditory system begins prenatally, and continues into infancy, remaining malleable throughout preschool and early childhood. Language like vision is bounded by a critical period but is shaped by experience. Language is a social act and within the first year the brain is molded for language.

Doctors Hubel and Wisel in their Nobel Prize winning research have demonstrated that nature has a schedule for early brain development. Hubel and Wisel looked at the visual development of kittens to learn of more about the role of experience in brain development. They shut the eyes of kittens during the sensitive period when visual stimulation is needed. When they opened the eyes of the kittens they found that none of them had normal vision-even if there was nothing anatomically wrong with them. This research showed that brains capacity for visual processing depends on exposure to visual input at a critical period, the time span when the part of the brain that controls vision is forming neural networks. There is a window of opportunity for developing for the wiring of the brain, and once it passes, it never returns. The child must make do with the existing circuitry.

Dr. T. Berry Brazelton stresses the importance of early intervention. "The knowledge we have recently gained about ways the immature nervous system repairs itself makes clear that interventions should be started as early as possible. Children can recover from many problems of motor, cognitive, or emotional development. The earlier they are identified and appropriate ways to support and compensate are found, the better the outcome."

According to Dr Dana Johnson, neonatologist and researcher into child circumstances in Romania: "Orphanages are well known to be the worst possible environment for normal child development. Linear growth failure is common, with children losing one month of growth for every three months in institutional care—a phenomenon termed psychosocial growth failure. Delays in one or more domains (e.g. gross and fine motor, social-emotional, language and activities of daily living) are often present. For these children the clock is running at a hurried pace."

It is time then to make full use of our knowledge about the very young child. For the very young child every moment counts. The decisions we make for infants and toddlers may have a lifetime consequence. Special attention must be given to policy and practice to turn the tide for very young children drowning in lost opportunity. Dr. Brazelton underscores the importance of development: "Getting the baby fed is only half of the job.

Learning to communicate with the baby-touching, holding, rocking, talking, and learning to synchronize the baby's behavior-are as important as getting him fed." This simple statement sets a global standard for the care of children.

Children suffer when groups grow too large and intimacy is lost. We know and have discussed the importance of purposeful communication between caregiver and child. This is how the brain grows. This cannot happen in care that is impersonal where the child's sense of self is not heard and understood by those around them. Children need to feel protected enough to explore their world with the safe anchor of a trusted adult close at hand.

There is no simple answer on how to provide for children without parental care. We are however becoming increasingly aware, if children are to benefit from our interventions a multi-tiered partnership is necessary. The concept of a top-down system of care where policy and practitioner are disconnected harm children.

Child development is both opportunity and crisis. When each developmental crisis is seen as opportunity, caring professionals can use this time to reach out to families and caregivers and make sense of what the child is experiencing. This offers not only support but will prevent future problems. Policy and programs must be crafted in a way that reaches out. This reaching out to explain and support is what Dr. Brazelton has come to term as Touchpoints. Touchpoints is about making relationships with caregivers which enable practitioners to support them in the nurturance of young children by providing anticipatory guidance about the predictable challenges of the early years of life. Touchpoints asks practitioners to look for times to build structures around families or scaffolding to support them at times of crisis.

What can be done then to keep children from the doors of orphanages and in the arms of family even during crisis?

Solutions to this problem are found in the multi-tiered partnerships I referenced earlier. An agenda for change should be based on a common value of building families not orphanages. When children have the opportunity for consistent, quality, family based care their brains develop. It starts with child and family friendly policies committed to preserving families. When necessary, children should be placed first within their kinship network and if there is no one available, then foster family care. Well trained social workers are needed for developmentally appropriate assessments and interventions. This will involve a partnership between universities and public policy makers. Children placed in foster care should be placed with families who are assessed and determined to be safe to care for children. Foster carers need training and support. Both social workers and foster carers need to understand early infant brain development and their important role in providing quality care for children. As you can see developing an integrated system of family based care is complex. It mirrors the complexity of the developing brain of a baby. Each needs nurturance and positive regard for full development. It takes time and vigilant care. When the infant cries it needs the response of a concerned adult. We need to listen to the voice of vulnerable children.

The tasks are enormous, but do not underestimate what you can do. We have in the end the power to do what Margaret Mead the noted anthropologist concluded: "Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world-indeed it's the only thing that ever has…we all change the world one child at a time." The infant and toddler need our welcoming overtures, our closeness, and to be brought near to significant loving adults for their brains to develop. Every Child has taken on that challenge. In a January 1, 2006 news' release a positive commitment to children was made by the president of

Moldova announcing wide-reaching changes to Moldova's child care system. Stella Grigoras of Every Child in responding said "This announcement is wonderful news for Moldova's children and I am extremely proud of the role Every Child has played in this development. When we first started working on this issue, we could not even bring up the subject of replacing institutional care, and now it is a reality. I salute the President's decision to put childcare so high on the agenda and take such a great step forward. Children are our future and this new policy is all about putting children first and providing the best environment to give them every opportunity to develop and eventually take their rightful place in adult life." There is no finer example of what a committed person like Stella can do if we want to move this urgent agenda for Moldova's children forward.

Now armed with this information about the importance of early infant brain development what will you do? The infants and young children of Moldova depend on you for their future.

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Andy BILSON,
professor, University of Central Lancashire, UK

Gatekeeping Services for Children:
Key issues for child protection reform in Moldova

Moldova, like many of the countries in the process of developing market economies, has inherited a problem of over-use of institutionalization of children made worse by the long economic depression that has followed the market reforms of the last decade. This problem was recently acknowledged in the speech of President Voronin when he said**:**

"The current child protection system in the Moldova Republic is fragmented and inefficient and is oriented only to a small extent to the methods of prevention and decrease of child abandonment by the parents, through the support of families in difficulty. The main form of protection of the child in difficulty is the institutionalisation – the placement of children in large and, usually, isolated from the community residential institutions …This residential system that we inherited from the soviet period does not meet the current requirement any more and is not an appropriate way of helping children who need care that would replace their families. … The institutional care has negative effects on children, reducing their life chances due to non-adequate psychical and emotional development. The graduates of these social establishments are often unable to handle usual life situations outside the institution; they do not have the independent life skills – they do not know what a refrigerator or a gas-stove are and they do not how to use them either. They cannot go shopping by themselves".

He went on to make it clear that he wants to see extensive reforms of the child protection system to ensure that children do not enter institutions unnecessarily and instead that they receive help and support in their homes and communities.

This commitment to reform at the highest level is essential if Moldova is to provide children and families with new forms of community based support. In addition to the commitment of government, Moldova has received support form the European Union which has provided funding for two programmes of technical assistance through the TACIS (Technical Assistance to the Commonwealth of Independent States) scheme. The first of these was managed by EveryChild and has just finished and was the subject of the conference at which this paper was presented. The second project is managed by UNICEF and is continuing this work to support the government's efforts to promote child protection system reform.

However, child protection reform is no simple matter. Not only are there vested interests in maintaining the current system, but also there are many misconceptions that lead to resistance to reform. In addition the reform process itself can lead to undesired outcomes which have been called unintended consequences. This paper will discuss how a strategy of gatekeeping can help to ensure that there is effective reform and can guard against some of the most common problems found in attempting major reforms of child protection systems.

RESISTANCE TO REFORM

There are a number of reasons for resistance to reform. Some are due to self-interest. For example, for residential staff reform threatens their livelihoods. Not only may some staff risk loosing jobs, even if work is guaranteed they may lose advantages of institutional work such as enhanced pay for teachers, free food and so on. Heads of institutions will also risk losing the status that such highly regarded jobs entail. Similarly staff in ministries may lose status if the substantial budgets for which they are currently responsible are transferred and spent elsewhere.

There are also reasons for resistance that are more to do with misrepresentation of the utility of the current system of institutionalisation. Commonly, where there is an over-use of residential care, this is built on a 'rescue mentality' which assumes that children are better off away from (rescued from) their parents. The need for rescue can be framed in a number of ways. For some children with disabilities it may be believed that

institutional care provides education or treatment though it is rare for such treatment, if it is provided at all, to be best supplied within an institution. For other children it is assumed that institutional care rescues them from poor and inadequate parents or poverty. Whilst there are some children who need protection these children deserve the opportunity to live in a family rather than the expensive and ineffective institutions currently used. The evidence from the pilot areas in Moldova where assessment of families requesting that their children be placed in institutions shows that the majority need very little support and that the main reason children end up in institutions is because of poverty. As President Voronin pointed out the cost of institutional care is many times higher than the level of financial support that families might need

A third set of reasons for resistance are built around misrepresentation of the reform itself. In these cases it is suggested that reform will lead to increases in street children or that change should be slow to ensure that alternatives can be properly tested and in place before institutions are closed. Whilst there has been some research into the closure of Mental Hospitals in the West leading to people with mental health problems ending on the streets or in prison this is more to do with reforms that were undertaken without adequate provision of services. In contrast the phenomenon of street children is more often associated with children who have been in care than any attempts to reform child protection systems. As for the need for slow reform the pilot gatekeeping projects in Moldova and elsewhere show that effectively targeted services bring about rapid changes. Often the various arguments against reform will be mixed together in a powerful cocktail which hides the underlying self-interest of the arguer.

A second set of issues comes about in the reform process itself. Where alternatives such as foster care and community based services are introduced to child protection systems, they frequently become additions rather than replacements for institutions. Thus the new service comes in and the old service remains. This

...The institutional care has negative effects on children, reducing their life chances due to non-adequate psychical and emotional development. The graduates of these social establishments are often unable to handle usual life situations outside the institution; they do not have the independent life skills...

is in part due to resistance to change but also because they are introduced without an effective process to target the new services on those children most in need and without plans for closing the old institutional services. Gatekeeping (Bilson and Harwin 2003) is a process that can lead to the effective targeting of services for children as alternatives to institutional care but it needs to be part of a comprehensive reform strategy that includes planning for the new services needed to support families and the closure of institutions.

GATEKEEPING

In response to the Moldovan Government's request for support the EU funded *EveryChild* to work with the Moldovan ministries on the *Capacity Building in Social Reform* project. A key objective of this project was to support the government to develop working models of alternative childcare and decrease the reliance on institutional care. Central to this was the implementation of a gatekeeping strategy. Gatekeeping involves the targeting of services to ensure that they are only provided to those for whom they are intended. The four minimum requirements for gatekeeping identified by the UNICEF and World Bank project *Changing Minds, Policies and Lives* (Bilson and Harwin, 2003, p 19) are:

- *A range of services in the community* to provide help and support to children and their families;
- *Decision-making based on assessment and review* of children's needs and family circumstances;
- *An agency responsible for co-ordinating the assessment* of the child's situation-- the process of assessment is complex and requires an organisational structure to employ staff to carry out assessments, to provide or purchase services, to keep records, and to review plans for children; and,
- *Information systems* to monitor and review decisions and their outcomes and to provide feedback on the operation of the system.

The EveryChild project implemented gatekeeping in three Raions before disseminating them more widely across the country. Prior to the EveryChild project as in the rest of the country, entry to institutional care was not based on a thorough assessment of the best interests of the child. In order to implement decision-making based on assessment, EveryChild have developed legislation that can be passed by the Raional Council. This establishes a Commission for Child Protection, whose members are independent people with an expertise in child care. Officials responsible for admissions of children to the various institutions are required to refer children to the Raional social work team for an assessment and to take advice from the commission before making a decision to place a child in an institution. In order to make its recommendation, the commission receives a report from a social worker assessing the child's best interests and holds a hearing at which parents and children can attend. This innovative idea to establish a decision- making process using local regulations has its limitations (principally

that the Commission is an advisory body rather than decision making) however it legitimizes the new process without the need for the lengthy delays that can ensue from attempts to establish national legislation and in practice decisions of the commission were rarely overturned.

Three key issues are raised by the use of gatekeeping in the pilot areas. The first is that the majority of parents only required advice or short-term support to maintain children within their family. When the importance of parents to their children, rather than the benefits of institutionalization, was emphasized, they did not wish to place their child in care. The second is that for those children where poverty was associated with other difficulties, the input of the independent panel helped to ensure that social workers put sufficient effort into finding alternatives. Even the raional child protection teams who had undertaken extensive training found difficulty in maintaining the focus on community based support and an independent viewpoint was needed to achieve this. The third is that the change to the level of entry to institutions was immediate and substantial. The number of children entering institutions fell dramatically once gatekeeping was introduced. However the success of the project in the pilot sites is to some extent a result of the support and training that social workers and commission members received through the project. The project also developed a limited range of services and did not have the opportunity to gather detailed information on the reasons children enter care or to adequately involve local communities in planning what they need. They were also limited because the development of alternatives, if it is to avoid net-widening, needs to go alongside a plan to redistribute the resources currently tied up in institutional care.

KEY ISSUES
FOR REFORM IN MOLDOVA

The Pilot projects in Moldova show what can be achieved by effectively targeting alternatives to care and ensuring that families considering placing their children in institutions are assessed in order to see how the best interest of children can be met. In these pilot raions there has been a rapid decline in entry to institutional care. Thus effective gatekeeping will lead to rapid change. However if this work is to develop further it will be necessary to take two key further steps.

The first is to develop plans for the transfer of resources from the institutional sector into community based services. At present there are 'perverse' incentives which mean that raions must pay for community based services whilst institutional ones come from central budgets and are effectively 'free'. The TACIS project undertook a financial review of the institutional system in Moldova. This review shows that there are sufficient resources tied up in the institutional sector not only to fund alternatives, but also to improve educational services more widely. However, this may require a period of dual funding to release the resources as well as the political will to close institutions which are still widely seen by the general public as the best way to support children.

Planning for the reduction in the number of institutional beds will require closure planning and ensuring the budgets currently spent on institutions are transferred into community based services. This will need action by a range of ministries

a) to plan for the redistribution of budgets;

b) to ensure that, where institutional staff have the skills and desire, they are transferred into community based services and for others there are programmes of retraining or aid to find alternative employment; and

c) to develop a new workforce capable of undertaking the community based services needed to support children and families.

Community based services are staff intensive and the transfer of funds from the institutional sector should, increase the overall numbers of posts available for working with children.

The second step is to engage in service planning with local communities to ensure that any new services are responsive to their needs. This will require collection of detailed information about children who currently enter institutional care particularly focusing on the problems that prevent families from coping. In the small research project that author undertook as part of the evaluation of the pilot projects and the gatekeeping strategy it was found that this help might range from practical support with transport through financial aid to programmes of child protection. Whilst there will be a need for a some children to have placements in foster care and for a small number of places in smaller more homely institutions, for the majority of children currently entering care the alternative will be community based services to support their families.

The needs of children will vary widely between different communities and effective alternatives cannot be designed or dictated from the Centre. This will require raions to be given the power to plan for services and to have control over the budgets they require for this.

CONCLUSION

Moldova has already achieved a great deal and the current projects give a clear direction for change. However if the impetus is not to be lost there will need to be effective planning both for new services and for the transfer of resources. There will be those who will suggest that the pace of change needs to be slower but this denies the lessons that can be gained from the pilots that effective gatekeeping brings about rapid declines in the number of children needing to be institutionalised. From this evidence and knowledge of reform programmes elsewhere it is likely that slow change will mean no change.

REFS
BILSON, A. & HARWIN, J. 2003 *Gatekeeping Services for Vulnerable Children and Families in: Changing Minds, Policies and Lives UNICEF/World Bank Series, UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre, Florence: UNICEF/World Bank.*
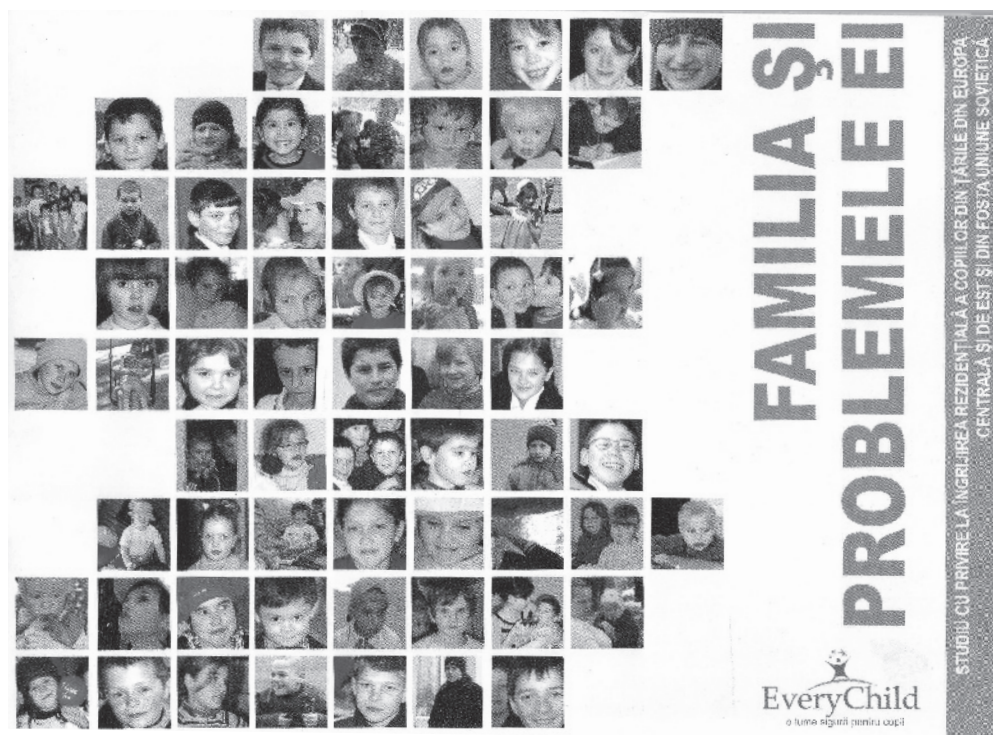
A year or so ago, EveryChild, for which I was then working, asked me to do a piece of work that would look back on the last 15 years or so since the collapse of the communist system, and examine what had happened to the process of reforming institutional care for children in Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union: what was the actual situation after 15 years, what were the problems and what had been achieved.
The result was a report called Family Matters, and it was originally published about a year ago.
Since then, it's been translated into several languages and now a Romanian language version has been prepared.

Richard CARTER,
research consultant, UK

"Family Matters"

It's quite a long report, and I will attempt only to summarise it now, otherwise we'd be here all day. I start out by trying to understand why institutional care is so prevalent in this region, and for this have to go back into a bit of history. Institutional care goes back a very long way, at least to Italy in the middle ages, but in this region the first institutions were in Russia in the 18th Century: in Russia and St Petersburg. They were very impressive buildings – in fact, a doctor who accompanied Napoleon's invading army in 1812 thought they were 'worthy of the most civilized nation on earth,' But life inside was not as impressive.

Over one thousand children were admitted in 1767, but of those, only 15 survived the year, and conditions were not seriously improved for over 100 years.
Then, in 1917, came the Revolution, and the views of Marx's friend Friedrich Engels became very influential. The family was seen as wholly bourgeois.

To take one example, we have the views of Zinoviev's wife, Z Lilina, who told the world that "Children, like soft wax, are malleable, and should become good communists. We must rescue [them] from the nefarious influence of family life... we must nationalise them. From the earliest days of their little lives, they must find themselves under the beneficent influence of the Children's Gardens and the Communist Schools" … and so on at length.

And there was also the influence of Lenin's educational adviser Anton Makarenko, who was concerned about emphasizing physical labour, discipline and collective education – all of which was to undertake the great project of the time, building the New Soviet Man – social engineering on the grand scale.

And part of this process involved, of course, removing children, as much as possible, away from the terrible influence of parents by putting them

institutions where they could be brought up "properly". – Lunacharskii described children in orphanages as "state children" whose Father is the state and their Mother, the whole of peasant society."

Well, things didn't quite turn out like this, because of the influence of outside events – the Civil War and, of course, the Great Patriotic War and so on. … until the 1950s, when Khrushchev introduced a decree that would have meant all children being educated in state boarding schools.

Luckily this failed but, and this is the point I am trying to make here, the influence of those early Bolshevik theories is still here. I don't mean by this that people are saying to each other, "That Lunacharskii, he was right you know", it's not as crude as that, but that the effects of these theories still linger on, though in a rather attenuated form.

And, added to that is the heavy influence of the professionals – I think it's linked in some obscure way to the effects of the Bolshevik theories, but it's hard to prove. What it means is that, when two views are being considered, the parents' and the doctors', it is usually the doctors' view that prevails.

And linked to this was the prevailing mindset in Soviet times, which didn't see social work as a proper profession because it was thought to be wrong to work with problem families – far better to remove children altogether from the influence of such 'bad' parents. In fact, there wasn't even any need for a welfare policy in the perfect Soviet state:

"Because every action of the socialist state is welfare itself"

All of this means that, at a time when in Britain we have got away from the dominance of institutional care, here, in this region, it is still not just the first choice for children in difficulties, but effectively the only choice.

But now we come to the present: what has happened since the breakup of the Soviet Union? Well, despite the great hopes the followed the breakup, there was an economic collapse that was both longer and deeper even than the Wall Street Crash of 1929 – in that, the US economy had recovered within 7 years, whereas parts of this region are still, even now, a long way from recovery.

The crash here combined huge rates of inflation, high levels of unemployment and the public expenditure reductions which were made in the wake of the economic liberalisation – the so-called 'shock economic therapy' – to impose a huge

cost in terms of human suffering. Poverty greatly increased: UNICEF estimate conservatively is that, between 1989 and 1994 in the region an extra 75 million people fell into poverty.

The result was particularly severe pressure on the most vulnerable: the elderly, the disabled and, particularly, families with children – to such an extent that one study suggested that simply the presence of children in a family was itself an indicator of poverty. And, despite efforts at child welfare reform, the resulting pressure on families has meant that there has been more, not less recourse to institutional placement.

How many children are there in institutional care?

Before I answer, I should first say that it is very difficult to know the actual figures, because there are many problems in finding out the true position:

• *The lack of reliable statistics.* State-collected statistics are unreliable and difficult to question when many regimes are, shall we say, not very democratic.

• *Inconsistent data collection.* Responsibility for childcare is generally divided between ministries, each with its own budgets and information systems, so to collect consistent data presents problems. For example, in a study in Azerbaijan, I was quoted figures for the numbers of children in institutional care in the country that ranged between 8,000 and 120,000.

• *Problems of definition:* the definition of 'an institution' used in state-collected data is often uncertain.

• *Lack of clarity of purpose.* Children's institutions that were originally provided for orphans (or for educational or health reasons) are frequently used to house children for social reasons.

• *Faulty collection of data.* Poor data collection can result from inadequate

mechanisms or manipulation of the figures.

So for all these reasons we must treat official figures with care and have had to use a variety of methods in getting at our estimate of the numbers in institutional care in the region.

The official figures say that there are around 700,000 children in institutional care in Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, but we believe the true figure is at least 1.3 million, and probably much higher. And how does that compare with the situation at the breakup of the Soviet Union?

If we look at the figures we see that although the **numbers** in institutions have fallen over the last 15 or so years (the green line), because the numbers of **children in the population** have fallen faster (the blue line), the **rate of placement** has actually increased (the red line). So the net effect is that things are in some ways actually worse now, despite 15 years of attempted reform.

Now that's a rather bleak picture; add to this that we know (as we've heard earlier at this conference from several speakers) that residential care is bad for children – it causes delays in their physical, intellectual and social development, it results in poor health (many infectious diseases and parasitical infections) and the ever-present dangers of bullying and abuse.

But, as we've also heard, there are solutions, all based around family-type care – Which is both more effective and less costly

And reforming the system is not easy but it is possible; there are three key factors in reforming the system:

Gate-keeping is essential to restrict entry to the institutions – otherwise all the good work you do in reintegrating families of children who are already, there will be lost because the huge social pressures I spoke of will lead to demand for more placements: you have to cut the supply off at the source,

Change must be managed carefully: as we heard from David Larter yesterday, you have to build up the new services at the same time, or even slightly before, you close down the old ones. And you can't just get rid of the staff in the old system: it's essential to work with them and to treat them fairly, and, related to that,

Training/capacity building are essential to a well-managed programme of reform.

Now, all of this has been a rather quick and superficial run through what is a longer, more complex argument.

> ...Lunacharskii described children in orphanages as "state children" whose Father is the state and their Mother, the whole of peasant society."

A SAFE WORLD

Now, when services should become national practice, when reform is going to affect all children of the country, it is vitally important that we, adults,

The future depends on us

*Cristina REVENCO
the VII-th grade pupil*

The Conference "A Safe World for Children" organised by EveryChild gathered 40 children from lyceums in Chisinau, from 2 placement centres and 1 gymnasium-internats from the country. During the two days of conference the pupils tried to find solutions to the problems faced by the 12000 children who do not have a family and have to live separately from their parents – in gymnasium-internats, orphanages, family placement centres. In the message that we addressed from the conference tribune we said that "our country wishes a better future, a blue sky, a sunny life, that is why we appeal to adults, because only they can help us and change the future. Life is a continuous fight. So, let us fight for fairness, so that our dreams flourish in songs. Let us fight for the observance of the right of all the children in the Republic of Moldova". I should also say that before the Conference we had several visits to child protection institutions and structures. There we organised different activities with children abandoned by their parents. We made together a survey, a photo report, a short movie, an exhibition of pictures. In order to contribute financially to the support of children in difficulty, we decided to place these pictures in an auction.

Not a single child must live outside the family

Sanda-Maria GRIGORAS, the V-th grade pupil

Children who don't have parents should be placed in families, in an environment where they would have affection, love, so that they feel like other children. It is very bad not to have parents, family, because it means you are deprived of the love given by parents. When you don't have a family it's the same as having the left hand without the right hand. All the children should have a family or, at least, persons that would replace their family.

Not a single child should end up in an institution

Adelina HARUJEN, the VII-th grade pupil

I came to the Conference "A Safe World for Children" to find out more about the activity of organisations dealing with the protection of children's rights and about the situation of orphans in Moldova. I made the conclusion that one of the solutions to the problems faced by children without parents should be the promotion of moral values among future parents. Thus, when in several years a new generation is created, each of the parents will recognise the values they have to promote so that children stay away from orphanages. I think it is very bad not to have a family, because not all the children living in internats will understand many of the objectives a person should achieve in order to become somebody in life.

What struck me is that in internats there are children with parents abroad

Dumitru GALUPA, the VII-th grade pupil

I came to this conference to contribute with some ideas in order to solve problems of children without parents. We saw that many internats are over-crowded; there are too many children there. In some of the institutions 700 children live. Every child needs attention, love, affection that the educators are unable to provide, since they are in limited numbers. In my opinion, there should be smaller centres in which fewer children could live, so that they enjoy a family environment. Unfortunately, many adults just say that life of children in internats is difficult and that's all; very few of them participate and really want to help these children. I was surprised by the fact that children whose parents are abroad live in internats. The adults who give their children in internats should know that the life of a child who lives outside the family is empty and does not have a model to follow in the future. After we visited these internats we made the conclusion that each member of the society, including, us, children, should help those who don't have parents.

FOR CHILDREN

know that what we do is in the children's best interest and is what they actually need and want. It was a challenge for the policy-makers to hear children's opinions.

Family is the best place for a child

Gabriela GRIGORAȘ, the X-th grade pupil

In the past few days we visited different placement centres, orphanages, gymnasium-internats, children's homes and we saw the problems children face there. In my opinion, these problems should be addressed starting from state authorities, because only they can adopt the most important decisions. We, children must get to adults' hearts and make them understand that the future of thousands of children depends on them. If it depended on me, I would have the following argument – the internats and placement centres are not the best places for a child. Each child has the right to a family and we must do everything for them to have a mother and a father. Only in this way we will have citizens who will fully develop socially and professionally.

Adults abandon their children because of poverty

Viorel FEODOSIEV, the IX-th grade pupil

I came to this conference to see how the Government protects children's rights and what is being done to make their life easier. During the visits to centres for children and to internats, we saw that children, even if somehow supported, do not receive the warmth they could get in a family. During these days we found out that in our country there are a lot of children abandoned by their parents. I think that adults abandon their children rather because of poverty. Because they don't have a job or they are not paid enough to take care of their children, they find the "easiest" and the most despicable solution – they leave their children in orphanages or in internats.

17 children live in one room in internats

Diana RUSU, the XII-th grade pupil

More attention should be paid to children in internats. What I liked most of all in the family-type placement centre was the atmosphere that is very close to the family one. At the same time, we saw that there are significant differences between the internats and family placement centres. In the internats, 15-17 children live in one room. In the centres, we saw much fewer children and we had the feeling that they felt better, almost like in a family.

I believe that it is very bad for a child to live in an internat. First of all and most importantly, in this environment children are deprived of parental love, of the warm family atmosphere.

Every child deserves a family

Nicu MAMALIGA, the VIII-th grade pupil

I came to this conference to find an answer to the following question – how does the State take care of children without parents and, which is more important, how does it protect them from any kind of abuse? Before the conference, during several days we visited some internats and placement centres. Honestly, the life of children there seemed to me far from the atmosphere we have at home. I had the feeling that internat teachers and educators do not really care about children. In family-type placement centres I saw a totally different attitude of adults towards children. Of course, it cannot be the same situation as in a family, but still, this one is different from that in internats. My conclusion is that the centres, where fewer children live, are better and more efficient than the internats, where several hundreds of children are raised.

Women who abandon their children have no heart

Daniela ZAHARIA, the IV-th grade pupil

I came to this conference to help the children. I feel sorry for them. We visited children's homes, internats and we saw how sad a child is without his parents. I felt sorry that some mothers do not have a soul. I think women who abandon their children have no heart. The life of children in internats is sad. Even though many of them told me that they feel good there, I don't think it's true, because they are deprived of the warmth only parents can give.

THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CHILDREN PARTICIPANTS AT THE CONFERENCE

"A safe world for children"

REQUIREMENTS FOR THE GOVERNMENT, FOR EVERY CHILD TO HAVE A FAMILY:

1. Assure a better financial situation of families;
2. Employment possibilities for parents, in order to prevent their leaving abroad;
3. Assure accommodation for socially vulnerable families;
4. Apply certain forms of punishment for persons who abandon children;
5. Support families that adopt children;
6. Support young families via state allocations;
7. Organization of child parliament, that would participate in decision making in the area of child protection;
8. Form multi-functional teams that would engage in solving these problems, so that every child is integrated in his/her own family;
9. Assure education in mainstream schools for children with motor disabilities (in order to avoid discrimination);
10. Create educational programs for parents who decide to form a family;
11. Create alternative services for children in residential care;
12. Create better living conditions for the whole society.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE CIVIL SOCIETY:

1. Involve in charity activity in order to support families in difficulty;
2. Launch public awareness campaigns in order to make the public aware of the idea that every child has the right to live in a family;
3. Facilitate employment of adults;
4. Distribute clips and information about children's right to a family, propagating the idea;
5. Support public authorities in development of more efficient services for the support of child and family in difficulty;
6. Promote education activities in educational institutions for the support of family values;
7. Promote new methods of family support;
8. Organize different activities, including charity theatre performances for the support and help of orphans or families in difficulty;
9. Promote the employment of social assistants within state institutions;

In the end the children had a message for adults:

**"We want to be heard and listened to.
The children are the future. Take care of them!"**

RESOLUTION
OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

„National and International Initiatives in Childcare Social Policy Reform"

Chisinau, October 27th, 2006

On October 26th – 27th 2006, Chisinau hosted decision makers and policy makers, university and civil society representatives, professionals from Great Britain, United States of America, Czech Republic, Romania, Ukraine, Georgia, Russia, Kyrgyzstan and Moldova who have shared their experience and presented and discussed contemporary childcare policy, practice and research.

We, the participants of this conference, appreciate the efforts made and salute the initiatives of the countries from the region to reform child and family Social welfare policies, in accordance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and international standards in this field.

Starting from the right of every child to grow up in the family,

Analysing the situation of children and the options provided by the actual protection system,

Emphasising the primary responsibility of parents towards their children but also that of the state to support families in the upbringing and education of their children,

Recognising that current social policies promoted by central and local authorities of the countries in the region do not adequately support families and continue to direct resources to residential institutions as the main focus of social support and child protection,

Stating that children and youth are not offered enough opportunities to express their opinions and be heard by decision makers and local authorities, at school, in the family, in the media, and in any other situation, formal or informal, in which decisions are made which affect their life and future,

Taking into consideration the commitments made by each country to the implementation of international treaties and conventions stipulating the fundamental rights of children, and the relevance of the legal frameworks and national traditions of each country,

Expressing our concern for the future and security of every child, and reaffirming the role and importance of children and families in the development of modern society, the participants of this conference, representing government structures, civil society, international organizations, professionals, children and their parents:

Call upon the governments of the countries in the region to build upon their efforts in promoting child rights, developing coherent policies for child care and child education within a family or family-type environment, developing a diversified system of community and family oriented social services focused on children and to recognise the urgency for ensuring improved outcomes for children

Underline that the implementation of United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is not only the responsibility of governments – donors and the civil society are to be actively involved in this process. The main task of government is to coordinate the development and implementation of social care policies, strategies and programs for children that stimulate child development within a family and ensure that placement of a child in residential care becomes the very last resort, only after all other alternaives have been fully explored,

Emphasise the importance of active collaboration between all bodies and agencies with responsibility for children to work together for their best interests and for a continuing dialogue between government on one hand and donors and civil society, including parents and children, on the other hand, in the development, implementation and monitoring of the child welfare policies.

Appreciate the efforts of civil society in the development of new approaches that can address the problems faced by children and families in difficulty but emphasise the importance and need for increased and ongoing collaboration between government and civil society, in order to extend positive practices in reducing the number of children in residential institutions and in increasing the number of children growing up in families or in a family-type environment.

Reaffirm our full commitment to work in close collaboration in order to promote and protect children's rights.

Will act with determination to make sure that children's rights become embedded in all civic and professional behaviour, respected by every single person.

Express our certainty that with common efforts, mobilizing the children, families and communities, involving all the relevant actors in society, we will be able to raise these issues to the level of priority policies of every government in the region, so that we are able to build a better and a more secure world for every child.

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