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Together for Children

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"The childcare system in the Republic of Moldova needs to be reviewed, so that it truly serves the best interests of every child. Institutional care produces negative effects on children, reducing their life chances by inadequate psychic and emotional development".

Vladimir VORONIN

The Head of the country made this statement during the National Conference "Social Dimensions of the Child Protection System in the Republic of Moldova", where decision makers from the Government, Parliament, Presidency, NGOs, international organizations took part. The participants underlined the importance of the reform for the future of the children and families at risk. This issue is exclusively dedicated to this conference. We present integrally the opinions of the participants, expressed during the conference.



A Moldova with and for Children

The speech of the President of the Republic of Moldova, Mr Vladimir VORONIN, at the National Conference “Social dimensions of the child protection system in the Republic of Moldova “

*Ladies and gentlemen!
Participants of the Conference!*

Today, the slogan of our forum is “Moldova with Children and for Children”. In principle, we could limit ourselves to this statement which speaks for itself about our political objective. Still, the goal of this conference is to achieve a common understanding of the need to reorganise the child protection system in the Republic of Moldova, so that it serves the best interests of the child, to identify the best ways of modernising this system and, of course, to launch together the reforms in this field.

The situation of children cannot be considered separately from the overall political, economic and social situation of the country. Children are the category which is most vulnerable to the persisting scourges of poverty, disease, abuse, neglect, exploitation, etc. These problems are global and have been highlighted in various declarations, including the Millennium Declaration. Along with other countries, the Republic of Moldova is committed to reduce to the maximum extent the impact of these negative phenomena on the development of each child providing him with the appropriate protection.

Our presence at this conference is proof of the common concern towards children’s problems and the wish to apply in

practice all the assumed obligations.

I am going to highlight some problematic aspects of the current situation in child protection, focusing on its social dimension.

The current child protection system in the Moldova Republic is fragmented and inefficient and is oriented to only a small extent, to the methods of prevention and decrease of child abandonment by the parents, by supporting families in difficulty. The main form of protection for the child in difficulty is institutionalisation – the placement of children in large, and usually isolated from the community, residential institutions, to provide them with care outside their families. So, more than 12,000 children are placed in 68 social institutions of this kind throughout the country, which are technically subordinated to different administrative structures.

This residential system, that we inherited from the soviet period no longer meets the current requirements and is not an appropriate way of helping children who need care that would replace their families.

During childhood the attention and the individual approach is more important than the daily march in columns and the dinner with hundreds of peers.

Institutional care has negative effects on children, reducing their life chances due to in-adequate psychological

and emotional development. The graduates of these social establishments are often unable to handle usual life situations outside the institution; they do not have 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.

Because the teenagers in internats are isolated from the rest of community, from families, relatives, they do not have access to the support network they could rely on after graduation from the institution, facing problems in their social integration.

Moreover, the statistics show that institutional care is a costly form of care in comparison with prevention, based on family support systems and different community services, etc.

The best forms of protection of children in difficulty, (acknowledged by most countries through the ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and reflected in European standards) – are the measures of preventing the need of care outside the family, followed by alternatives to placement that provide a family environment or an environment that is close to the family.

Unfortunately, the legislation and the current centralised and extremely rigid funding mechanism stimulate the placement of children in social residential institutions.

Currently, the financial and material resources are directed mainly towards institutions and the children placed there and, only insignificantly, towards the child in the community who is at risk of abandonment or in other difficult situations.

The funding of social institutions is from the centralised state budget and ranges from 12,000 to 39,000 lei per year for every child. Nowadays, all institutions also receive additional support from the staff of public authorities who patronise them, from donors and economic entities.

On the other hand, the state allowances provided to families with low income, for child care, are ten-times smaller.

So, the financial resources that are currently extremely limited and should be oriented towards the most appropriate solution according to the problem, continue to be directed to the institutional system, even though the efficiency of the latter is limited.

By assigning functions and responsibilities in the field of child protection to local public authorities, but without planning the appropriate financial resources, we can see the interest of the authorities to get rid of the burden of supporting the family and children in difficulty, by the active placement of these children in social republican institutions, and the inadequate involvement of the community in the settlement of social problems in the field.

Due to the adequate funding from the state budget that enables the free provision of care, education and medical services to the children from institutions, these establishments, especially, the gymnasium-type internats (boarding-schools), have become quite attractive for the parents. It is regrettable that almost half of the total number of children are in institutions upon their parents' request.

I am also going to criticise the current mechanism for the admission of the child into internats. This mechanism lacks an adequate and professional assessment of the child's situation. Thus, a recent survey showed the excessive presence of children in the internats whose placement could have been avoided.

Once admitted into this system, children are there for a huge period of time – 7-8 years, many of them even until they become adults. The lack of social assistance services provided to the children and their families leads to the neglect of aspects related to the child's socialisation, the encouragement to continue the relationships with their biological family and the necessary procedures for the reintegration of the child in the family environment.

I appreciate the recent tendency for the creation and development in different localities of the country of new, community-based services that are alternatives to the residential ones. Many of them prove their efficiency and are successful in their activity.

At the same time, because of the



lack of an adequate legislative framework, of a deinstitutionalisation procedure and of development of new forms of protection, as well as an accreditation mechanism, a number of services are operating without a clearly defined status, developing chaotically without any record and adequate monitoring by the state, without any quality assessment, etc.

A gap in the system is the lack of an integrated and permanently updated database on children placed in residential institutions, as well as in other services, and a unified assessment and tracking system of children in the protection system. It is impossible to develop and implement appropriate social protection policies without these.

As for the legislative and normative framework on the family and the child, I want to say that this framework is too big and dispersed. Notwithstanding the fact that it covers a big part of the aspects on children, many provisions are expressed in a general way and some aspects regarding child

protection, especially the child in difficulty do not have legislative coverage.

An obvious problem, which has to be stressed, is the inefficient institutional system in the field of children protection.

At the central level, there are many structures which deal with this field, and many of their duties are duplicated. There is no adequate cooperation and coordination between these institutions. I am talking here about the Ministry of Health and Social Protection; Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports; National Committee on Adoptions; National Council on the Protection of Children's Rights and Ministry of Interior.

So, distinct elements of the same social problems are in the responsibility of different public organisations.

This overlapping of duties leads to a partial approach to the children's problems and to fragmentation and attenuation of responsibilities and sometimes to inefficient duplication of efforts, to an underdeveloped partnership between state structures and NGOs, to reduced capacities of fundraising from donors etc, which makes the present institutional system fail in meeting the needs in the field.

In mayoralities, at the local level, the situation is also to be improved, especially in the rural regions we don't have professionals, who would work in this field (except for a small number of social workers in some mayoralities),

At the raion level we have some specialists within various structures with a very weak coordination between them.

Taking into account the above-mentioned, the best interest's of the child and the importance of reaching European standards in the field, there is a need to reform the entire system of child protection.

It is high time to move on, to carry out our commitments, which are written in the most important strategic documents (UN Convention on Children's Rights, EGPRS, EU-Moldova Plan, Strategy on protecting the child in difficulty and others).

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The reform has to be based on the following general directions:

1. Consolidation of the institutional framework in order to provide a multi-disciplinary and integrated approach to child's needs and of a unique system of consecutive promotion of his/her rights. In order to do that, there is a need:

- To create at a national level a specialized structure with the role of elaboration, coordination and implementation of policies in the field of children rights protection (National Agency for Protecting Children's Rights),
- Creation, at a rayon level, of directorates of social assistance and protection of children's rights;
- Creation of a National Network of Social Workers, which would include all the villages and would contribute to the prevention of separation of the child and of infringing his/her rights, and would facilitate access for the most vulnerable layers of society to programmes of social assistance.

2. Developing mechanisms for supporting families with children in difficulty, which would be able to anticipate emergency situations and prevent children's institutionalization by carrying out some efficient activities by the social assistants; clear and transparent definition of the financial mechanisms for economic support of families with children, developing the system of community social services.

3. Modernization and reorganization of the residential protection system. Attention will be paid to:

- Reducing the number of institutionalized children by reintegration, where it is in the best interest's of the child, with natural or extended families;

protection through family-type alternatives, etc;

- Restructuring existing social institutions by dividing educational services, social services and medical ones;
- Reintegration of institutionalized children into the community by going to mainstream schools,
- Improving living conditions in these institutions by remodelling the dwelling spaces, in order to give more space to each child, thus providing an environment, which would be as close to the family as possible;
- Supporting institutions' employees in becoming the main actors of this reorganization, contributing with their experience, professionalism, involving them within the reorganized institutions or by creating other services for children.

For this it is necessary to create the Strategy of reform of the residential system, accompanied by a well-defined action plan.

4. Providing a unitary legislative framework, which would be in accordance with the provisions of international documents.

5. Reviewing of finance mechanism of the child protection system.

6. Elaboration and approval of the quality standards for all types of social services, targeted for children and the creation of the mechanism for accreditation of services in the field of children protection.

7. Creating a unique database, which would be permanently updated, on children who benefit from the protection system. Here I mean, both creating a registry software about children and equipping social workers with computers, who would work daily with primary information.

To sum up, I want to say that there is a need to include the basic elements of

interventions from the child protection field in a National Action Plan.

In the end I stress that reform does not only mean a simple reorganization of buildings and the elaboration of new services. It is a tool to be used to see all the children as individuals, citizens of this country, with all rights, who need to be protected and provided for. It is important to act, in order for these rights to become norms of thinking and behaviour, used from the civil and professional points of view, by each of us.

I want to thank everybody who helps us and supports us in carrying out these reforms and I encourage all the donors, international organizations to offer us financial and technical support for making efficient investments and to fulfil our goals in this field.

But the government will have to elaborate financial mechanisms, in order to provide for the continuity and stability of all projects in this field.

NGOs, governmental organizations, local authorities, academic circles, mass-media, parents, families, professionals from the field, children, - I call everybody to create a „strong national alliance” for promoting this reform.

Ladies and gentlemen!

All of us want to offer our children all the best. But all the best does not mean only sweets, the best clothes and toys. It means to create the best conditions for children's development and to provide a good life for everybody.

I am convinced that you, just like me, admit that this country's future shall be built on the multilateral and harmonious development of each child.

I wish good luck to our forum and I think that the exchange of ideas and good practices, just like partnership, are the foundation which would support our country in the common efforts in this field.





**Children are the joy and the future of humankind.
The Republic of Moldova needs physically
and spiritually healthy children.**

DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHILD PROTECTION SYSTEM IN THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

**Thesis from the report of Victor TVIRCUN,
Minister of Education, Youth and Sport**

ARGUMENT

• Our society and each Moldovan citizen needs to be sure of the safe and stable future of its country ;

• To immediately start reforms in the child protection field. The child is the one, who needs to be recognized as a personality and who wants to be treated on a equal basis, by recognizing differences of abilities, competences and intellectual possibilities, which are specific for each child. Actually, this is a fundamental international norm of the Children's rights, which are also respected by our country.

LEGAL FRAMEWORK

At the moment, The Government of the Republic of Moldova is motivated to work in the field of child by the following international documents :

- UN Convention on Children's Rights .
- European Social Charter.
- European Code of Social Security .
- Moldova-EU Action plan etc.

These international documents are developed, specified and used in a range of national-level documents

Constitution of the Republic of Moldova.

- Family Code.
- The Law on Children's Rights • The National Concept and Strategy on child's and family protection.

- The Law on Education.
- The National Strategy "Education for Everybody".

- The Law on Social Assistance.

- Economic Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy .

- The National plan on Prevention of Trafficking in Human Beings.

• The legal framework in the field is not yet complete, very often it is inefficient or doesn't function. This is why there is a need to adjust some national documents to the requirements of international legislation.

• The Government of the Republic of Moldova supports the President's idea about unifying all the documents in the field in a legislative package on Protection and Promotion of Children and Family Rights.

• There is no efficient implementation mechanism for the existing legal framework.

• The elaboration and implementation of this mechanism will be accompanied by the provision of qualified specialists.

• It is necessary to consolidate at the local and national level, the forces of the specialists, who are responsible for the family's and children's problems,

• It is necessary to make some amendments to the funding mechanisms in order to create community-based services for supporting vulnerable families and children.

RESIDENTIAL SYSTEM: STATISTICS ARE THE FOLLOWING

About 12 thousand children are placed in state social institutions, namely :

- gymnasium - internats
- Children's homes
- sanatorium schools
- auxiliary school - internats
- Special schools

The most frequent reasons for placing the child in such institutions are:

- Poverty.
- Increase in the number of incomplete/ single parented families – 26,5%.
- Increase of socially vulnerable families – 24,5%.
- And, of course, child abandonment – 10,5%.

PROBLEM

• No inter-ministry collaboration.

• No efficient partnership between central public authorities and local public authorities.

• Inefficiency of an open, constructive dialogue with civil society .

• The Government of the Republic of Moldova considers that further usage of residential institutions as means of child care is outdated and does not correspond to the need of our country's European integration, and it does not correspond to the international standards for child care.

• It is necessary to conceptualize and to ensure immediate provision of some reasonable alternative services, taking into account the objective of the Government of

the Republic of Moldova: each child shall have the right to live in a family, to know his/her parents, to benefit from their care, to live together with them, except in cases when this is against best interests of the child.

• The process of deinstitutionalization of the child cannot be done at once. by taking into consideration the best interest of the child.

DIRECTIONS OF ACTIVITY

• To elaborate the National Strategy of reforming the residential system of child protection.

• The National Consolidated Action Plan will begin in September 2006, in order to take specific steps, to make the strategic directions of reforming the system of protecting children's rights in the Republic of Moldova.

• To consolidate all the necessary resources in order to carry out the initiative of the President of the Republic of Moldova to create the National Agency on Protection of Children's Rights.

• Together with NGOs to carry out specific measures regarding prevention and fighting violence towards children, of trafficking in human beings, setting the repatriation mechanism for the children, who were abandoned abroad, creation of community-based services for various categories of children etc.

• To elaborate and to apply different standards for each type of institution and service for child's care and protection .

• To increase the payments for children's care in residential institutions and in family type children's homes, including financial stimulation of socially vulnerable families

• To elaborate a mechanism for initial, continuous and re-qualification training of the teachers from the field .

• To create the national curriculum in the field and the concept of creating and publishing books and other didactic materials for children with special educational needs.

• To carry out as soon as possible the mapping process of the entire child protection system in the Republic of Moldova and to create a database, which would be used to increase the quality of children's care .

A reform for the invisible children of Moldova



Ray Virgilio TORRES
UNICEF Representative
in the Republic of Moldova

*Your Excellency, distinguished guests,
ladies and gentleman....*

Since the 1990's countries in the CEE/CIS region continue to experience rapid economic growth. However attention to economic transition and increasing living standards often overlook and leave behind the most vulnerable, especially children. The proportion of children living in absolute poverty is striking in some countries. Despite an increasing awareness of child poverty and exclusion and a growing commitment of Governments, progress is slow and many countries in the region may not achieve one or more of the MDGs by 2015. Child poverty targets have brought attention to the need for better instruments to monitor children's well-being – to understand the trends and dynamics of child poverty and social inclusion over time, and to adjust policy measures accordingly.

Moldova has made impressive progress in poverty and child poverty: in 1999 71% of the population of Moldova was poor. In 2004, 26.5 % of the population lives in extreme poverty, but unfortunately, inequities persist.

Children in rural areas face a 2.6 times higher risk of living in poverty than those living in urban areas and the poverty rates increase with the number of children in the family: Forty percent of the households with 3 or more children are considered poor. Poverty makes children more vulnerable because it weakens the capacity of families to care and protect their children.

Children in poor families often

find themselves excluded from school, from health services, from access to information and from opportunities of professional training. We must make sure they do not disappear from view within their families, communities, that they do not become invisible to the Government, to donors, to civil society, to the media, to the private sector and even to other children.

The situation of children in Moldova is particularly difficult due to migration. The positive impact of migration and remittances on poverty reduction cannot be denied. It is an important coping mechanism for impoverished Moldovan families. However, this fact should not conceal the high price that the children left behind are paying, the psychological impact of separation on thousands of Moldovan children is serious and we are currently studying it but preliminary results seem to show that children suffer from migration in ways that should be enough for parents to take into full consideration before reaching the decision of migrating. The quality of care and guidance that every child needs to grow up as a well developed and balanced member of Society is simply not there for thousands of Moldovan children left behind by their parents. Let us bear in mind that in the last five years, the number of children living without one or both parents has doubled in Moldova: one in three Moldovan children is living without one or both her parents.

Moldova's social protection system is not prepared to face the challenge of tens of thousands of children left behind by migrating parents and the State has had to step in with the only available mechanism: institutionalization. With 11,500 children in institutions Moldova has one of the highest rates of institutionalization in Europe and even though the staff in institutions should be praised for their efforts and commitment to caring and protecting children, children belong in families, in their families and not in *internats*.

Still, in exceptional cases, some children have to be separated from their families, but this is a measure of last resort and should only be when the family abuses the child or is violent with her or when extremely specialized care needs to be provided. UNICEF is of the opinion that most of the children living in *internats* in Moldova today, should not be there in the first place.

UNICEF enthusiastically welcomes His Excellency President

Voronin's initiative to reform the child protection system in Moldova and salutes the fact that the reform will be driven by the Government's interest in the well being of children. Of course we are all interested in meeting European standards, of course we are all for the achievement of the MDGs and the objective of the EGPRSP, but the reason we are here today is not a plan, it is not a demand from some friendly Government, it is because a country, and its Government, have decided that from now on, the well being of its children will become a priority. End all forms of violence against Moldovan children

The current on-going efforts to design a Plan to combat violence against children is one other proof of this decision. Children in Moldova must be safe, must feel safe, not only at home, where they should be taught and guided without physical or psychological violence; but children should also be safe in the streets, on their way to school and obviously at school. The recent case reported in the newspapers of corporal punishment by one teacher in Moldova concerns us. We were glad to see that the authorities took the case very seriously and that it is being investigated because in this manner, and if the case of abuse is confirmed, measures could then be taken to ensure that children no longer have to go to school in the fear of being slapped by their teachers, never again in Moldova. UNICEF believes that children entrusted to the care of an educational centre should learn and develop in an intellectually stimulating environment where their physical integrity is guaranteed at all times.

The reform of the Child Protection System of Moldova

Most countries in the CEE/CIS region have embarked on the reform in a fragmented manner, with no operational plans nor coherent policy frameworks and leaving the residential institutions at the margin of reforms. Inter-sectoral and national-local coordination has also been lacking and costing of services to negotiate budgets has been practically non existent.

Based on what I have heard here today, UNICEF is glad to observe that the Government of Moldova has decided to take a different path, one where the reform agenda will be well articulated, with time-bound targets, costs and clear reform management structure.

A National child protection authority

We feel His Excellency President Voronin's vision of a protection system that no longer foresees institutionalization as the basic means of assisting children is in full compliance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child. We also feel that his intention of addressing the fragmentation and duplication of responsibilities among Governmental agencies by consolidating them into one central agency is very appropriate. We hope this will be done under the aegis of a strong Ministry or Governmental agency that enjoys sufficient political and budgetary support to function effectively and to be able to positively influence policy and budgetary decisions in other line ministries.

A National network of social assistants

We fully endorse His Excellency's vision of a network of social assistants, at least one in each of the Primarias.

We support the reform of the residential care system

We believe this will minimize placement of children in boarding schools by strengthening preventive family support services, further developing community-based services, including foster care, adoption and guardianship, for those children who can not remain with their biological families. In line with its mandate, UNICEF will advocate for giving special attention to children with disabilities and ensuring their social inclusion through, among other ways, access to education.

A monitoring and evaluation mechanism for child protection services

Such a mechanism would ensure that quality standards - - to be established for all social services - - , are complied with in benefit of children within the social protection system.

How will UNICEF support this ambitious but necessary and important reform?

Advocacy and social mobilization:

UNICEF offers its technical assistance to this reform, we will help you advocate and mobilize the goodwill of all concerned actors in the reform including parents and children themselves.

Explicitly target disparities:

We will support the efforts of the Government in ensuring that disparities are explicitly targeted, that all plans and

interventions strategically focus on the most vulnerable and on the excluded, that the fight against discrimination and stigma underpins the reform.

More and better research:

We offer our contribution to increasing the Government's capacity in research, to improve data collection and monitoring on children's well-being for better planning, programming and more cost-effectiveness. For instance, the situation of abuse and exploitation and actions taken to address these problems should be studied.

Monitoring, transparent reporting and oversight of child protection services:

UNICEF believes that transparent monitoring and public reporting of the different child protection services being provided to children will substantially contribute to increasing their quality. These services include institutionalization but also adoption and fostering. As soon as possible, non-governmental organizations should comply with the same quality standards of care and protection that will be set for Governmental institutions and should be subject to the same quality supervision and oversight. The care, safety and protection of children is a matter of public order.

Reviewing national legislation:

We will support you in strengthening national legislation as well as regulations enforced in every institution providing care and support to children including non-governmental organizations. These laws and regulations should match international commitments to children, including those rights aiming at ensuring the conditions of living necessary to the child's development.

The voice of children:

UNICEF will support the Government in ensuring that children learn to respect their parents, their Moldovan cultural identity, the respect of the languages of Moldova, that children learn and respect the national values of Moldova, that they respect Moldova and they respect civilizations different from their own as well. UNICEF believes that this is needed to prepare children for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes. To achieve this, children must know their rights, they must be encouraged to express their opinions. UNICEF will support the creation of spaces where children can exercise their right with particular attention to those children who have less access to information and participation because of their socio-economic status.

Parents and children have the right to know and to be informed in channels and ways that are age-appropriate and culturally acceptable, they must acquire basic knowledge on child health, nutrition and psychology, they must learn basic facts about life in society in order to be able to protect themselves and others against disease, injury, abuse and exploitation.

Moldova will be an example for countries in the region and elsewhere

The reform of the child protection system His Excellency is proposing is ambitious and UNICEF will support it. We will make everything in our modest power to help you succeed because it will dramatically improve the well being of Moldovan children and because we feel it will become an example for countries in the region, and elsewhere in the world.



European dimension of social protection of children

Jon Barrett
EveryChild TACIS
Project Team Leader



Since its formation the Council of Europe has drawn up many legal instruments of prime importance to the protection of children's rights, such as the European Convention on Human Rights, the European Social Charter and the European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, to cite but three. Thanks to these instruments, States have been obliged to adopt measures - including legislation - constituting significant progress in the protection of children's rights. Their interpretation is increasingly based on the most frequently ratified convention worldwide: the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The Monaco conference on 4 and 5 April 2006 launched the three-year programme "Building a Europe for and with Children" [2006 – 2008]. The programme comes under the Plan of Action adopted by the Heads of State and Government at the Warsaw Summit [May 2005]. Its objective is to help decision-makers and operators concerned implement general policies on awareness-raising, information and prevention, in order to uphold and further children's rights generally and especially their right to be protected against all forms of violence.

The European Commission, through its TACIS programme of support to the Moldovan Government, has made, and continues to make, a significant investment in demonstrating how services for those children most at risk can be improved.

Within this context the European Union offers practical measures through the EveryChild TACIS project in collaboration with the government of Moldova and its Ministries of Health and Education to decrease reliance on institutional care. We are doing this by providing support to families in crisis, and therefore preventing the unnecessary placement of children in residential care.

In a changing society we need to provide for the strengthening of that society in the community itself, not by the isolation of our future generations. Children in institutions are removed from the realities of family life and not part of that community.

The European model of service provision for vulnerable children is varied, but has moved dramatically away from the reliance on institutional care over the final decades of the twentieth century. There were two main reasons for this policy shift. Firstly, research clearly and repeatedly demonstrated the negative effects of institutionalisation. It was clear that separation from parents did not, and could not, develop the interactional and transactional social skills and values required for everyday family and community life and this led to more anti-social than pro-social behaviour in many young people.

The second reason was the financial burden of institutional care on the state.

All of this has been recognised in many other countries very recently, like the Czech Republic, Slovenia, Slovakia, Romania, Bulgaria and Baltic's states through changes in their child protection policies. They have faced, as Moldova does today, a growing fiscal and social burden presented by the continued increase in the institutionalisation of children. And these children do not need institutions - they need integration into families. Moldova can learn very quickly from the lessons learnt during the recent reform of many of its neighbouring countries with regard to

the move away from reliance on residential child care.

Research has demonstrated [the most recent in Romania with the long term study "Attachment in Institutionalised and Community Children in Romania" at the Bucharest Early Intervention Project] that the impact of institutional care on a child's cognitive, emotional, intellectual and physical development can be significant and enduring. Other research evidence from both the East and the West since the 1950s has consistently shown that children's physical intellectual and emotional development is stunted compared to children raised in a family setting even where this is not in their birth family setting. The damage is greater the younger the child and the longer the duration of institutional care. These impacts are observed even in children from the best run institutions.

In Europe, only a generation ago, services for children often focused on the failure of the family to provide the child with adequate "care and parenting" based on inadequate or poor assessments of the problems a family was facing. Institutional care was also the most prevalent form of care. However, when policy changed and priority was given to family-based care, it was found that the majority of children were able to return to and stay in their families safely as long as they received the right kind of assessment and social work support. In order to promote this the measures of, gatekeeping, assessment and service management have been developed, as well as services of social work assistance, including family support, reintegration from institutions and the development of foster care.

It is critical that we as politicians, professionals and service planners understand children's developmental needs, appreciating the short timescales within which damage to their development can be sustained, particularly in young children. Meeting the needs of children for a consistent safe and caring adult with whom they can develop a positive attachment is critical to their wellbeing and development. Babies are programmed from birth to identify and respond first to mother then to other immediate consistent family members, not a changing team of carers.

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

The use of a comprehensive assessment procedure introduced and piloted by the MoHSP, MoEYS in collaboration with EveryChild TACIS project, will ensure, if implemented, that children are assessed to meet their actual needs ensuring those which need the most support get that support. The project has also developed and successfully piloted, in Moldova, a gatekeeping system similar to those tried and tested in European Countries. It is intended that this gatekeeping system will help those responsible for the planning of service provision to try to create a better balance between supply and demand, as well as to ensure a more effective management and targeting of social services and resources. We therefore propose that an active national gatekeeping strategy should be adopted, which will help to move the deinstitutionalisation process forward by preventing inappropriate initial entry into the care system. Thereby ensuring that children if placed out of home are not separated from their families any longer than is necessary.

It is important to mention the fact that there have been established the NGO Working Group on Children without Parental Care to prepare UN guidelines on work with Children without Parental Care. In the "Draft UN Guidelines one of the

key provisions is that "Governments should develop and implement comprehensive child welfare and protection policies, with attention to the improvement of existing alternative care provision, reflecting inter alia the principles contained in these Guidelines and instituted at every level of government." This is in compliance with the provisions of international human rights law, including in particular those of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as of the developing body of knowledge and experience in this sphere as reflected in other instruments and norms relating to the rights, interests, well-being and protection of children [such as the "2003 Stockholm Declaration"]].

In order to consolidate this, Moldova needs to develop a Unified Child Care Policy. The TACIS project has supported the Government by producing a consultative framework for this. This framework establishes the constraints within which professionals' work and the type and level of service they provide if and when necessary to vulnerable children. It is based on three key principles 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.***

In order to deliver this policy,



the creation of a national social work service as proposed by President Voronin is one of the priority child protection reform tasks for Moldova, dependent as it is on institutions as the only current form of state Social Service. Work has already been done to enable this with the creation of a unified university and national in-service social work training curriculum. In order to scale up the supply of properly trained social workers, Moldova will need to invest heavily in new training courses. But, for example, many staff currently employed in children's institutions have the relevant experience and skills. These people could be re-trained as social workers, community support workers or foster carers. Offering re-training to these personnel will aid the reform process and move it forward quickly. It is also apparent that a limited quantity of graduate social work training will be needed to meet workforce requirements. How these people are retained within the system is central to the success of any reform process.

The current TACIS project and its successor implemented by UNICEF both support the President's initiative to develop new approaches to services for children and vulnerable families and support the strategic change of policy, by the Government of Moldova in order to provide long-term sustainable impact that will improve the lives of children in Moldova. We also support the measure that President Voronin is initiating here today which are inline with reforms which are being introduced elsewhere in Europe

This conference today indicates clearly the start of that process of change in order to build a country with and for Children.



FINANCIAL MECHANISM OF THE CHILDCARE SYSTEM

Mihail POP,
Minister of Finance



As it was mentioned, the main form of protection for the child in difficulty within the existing childcare system is institutionalisation, which leads to the placement of children in residential institutions.

In 2005 the national public budget funded the activity of 85 social and educational institutions, including 19 schools (gymnasiums) – internats for orphans and children deprived of parental care, 38 special internat schools, 3 children's homes, 1 internat – sanatorium, 2 internats for children with mental disabilities, and 22 social assistance centres for children.

In 2005 13,206 children were institutionalized in the above mentioned institutions, of which 11,826 children were placed in educational institutions, and 1,380 – in social institutions.

To support these institutions in this period, the national public budget allocated 143663,2 thousand lei, or, an average of circa 11,0 thousand lei per child.

For the year 2006 the state budget allocated 18654,8 thousand lei for the protection of the child in difficulty. This sum

is posted for the functioning of 2 internats for children with mental disabilities in the towns of Orhei (boys) and Hincesti (girls), with the capacity of 630 beds, and 2 social assistance centres for children (Taraclia rayon and Criuleni rayon). These allocations include food expenditures – 3808,7 thousand lei, according to the norm of 18,50 lei per child/day, and for medicines and bandaging materials – 770,0 thousand lei, according to the norm of 3,80 lei per child/day. Thus, these norms increased compared to the ones approved for the year 2005, by 8,8% and 18,8% correspondingly.

Average annual costs for state budget support of one child under state guardianship, for the year 2006, amounts to 21,7 thousand lei, compared to 20,0 thousand lei executed in the year 2005, which means that the figure increased 8,7 per cent.

Having the main objective of the social protection of the child and

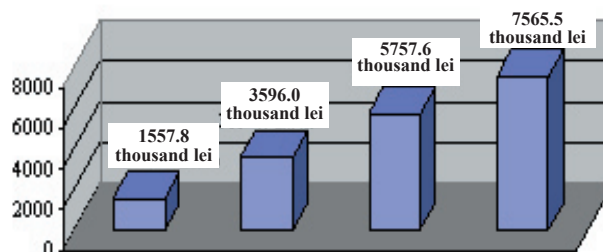
Temporary Placement Centres).

These allocations are estimated according to the average annual norm of expenditures for child support, which comprises food, medicines costs, payment for goods and services, and salary payment for the personnel.

The average norm of expenditures is reviewed annually, in accordance with the modifications made in the normative acts in the area, and depending upon existing prices.

For the year 2006 the administrative-territorial budgets planned 7565,5 thousand lei for the support of 845 children in Social Assistance Centres for children, which is 1295,8 lei or, 17%, more than in the year 2005. Correspondingly, in 2006 the number of children placed in these centres increased by 175 persons compared to the year 2005.

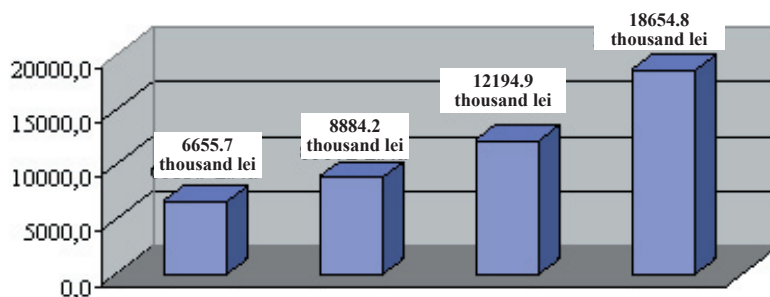
The dynamics of expenditures executed from administrative-territorial units budgets for Social Assistance Centers for children in 2003-2006



family, territorial – administrative units budgets allocate funds for the support of children in Social Assistance Centres (Day Social Assistance Centres for Children and

The average annual norm of expenditures per child in 2006 constitutes 9,0 thousand lei, which is 0,8 thousand lei, or 9% more than in 2005.

The dynamics of state budget expenditures for social institutions for children, years 2003-2006

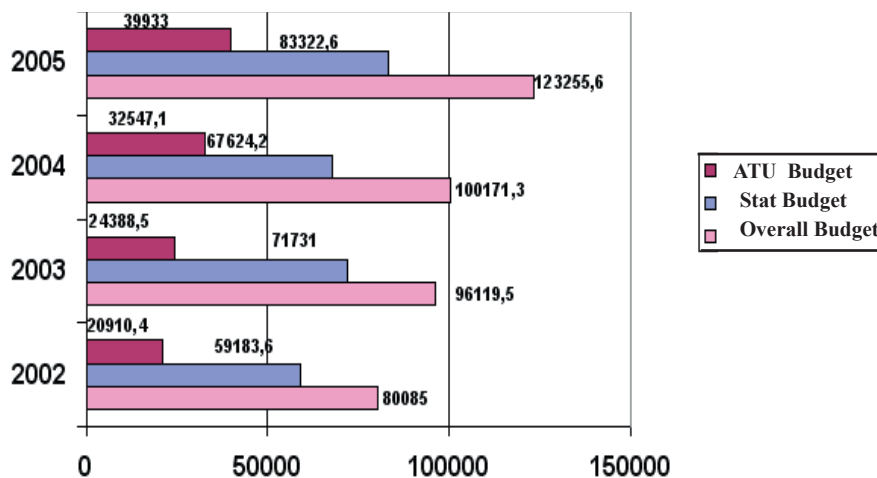


For the financial support of vulnerable families with children, the state budget for the year 2006 planned 114811,9 thousand lei for 149365 children, distributed as follows:

1. Single allocation at child's birth, for vulnerable persons – 14636,4 thousand lei. The average sum of the single allocation increased in the year 2006 by 33,3% compared to the year 2005.
2. Monthly benefit for child care, children under 1,5 years of age, offered to vulnerable persons – 41217,3 thousand lei.
3. Monthly benefit for child care, children aged between 1,5 and 16 years -- 58958,2 thousand lei.

Figure 1

The dynamics of expenditures from the national public budget, total internat-type institutions (thousand lei) (without capital investments)



As to the modernization of the legal framework, it's worth mentioning that according to social protection policy, from the year 2007 socially secure families with children between 3 and 16 years of age, will benefit from the state budget allocation for child care.

Benefits for the support of children between 1,5/3 and 16 years of age are allocated to families, depending on overall average monthly income of each member of the family in the previous quarter, and their sum does not exceed 54 lei.

The current mechanism of funding for residential care and the education institutional system for orphans and children deprived of parental care, as well as for children with developmental deficiencies, was created together with the system itself, and it remained practically unchanged since then. Unchanged also is the network of internat-type institutions.

Just as during the previous years, in 2005 the state budget funded 59 residential educational institutions, of which 34 were funded from the state budget, through the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, and 25 from the budgets of 13 administrative territorial units. The sum allocated to these institutions in 2005 constituted 123255 thousand lei, including 83322,6 thousand lei from the state budget, and 39933,0 thousand lei from the budgets of Administrative Territorial Units.

The dynamics of expenditures from the national public budget for the corresponding institutions is shown in Figure 1

As can be seen, during the years 2002 – 2005 public expenditures for this type of educational institutions increased from 80085,0 thousand lei in 2002 to 123255,6 thousand lei in 2005, or by 1,5 times.

The network of internat-type educational institutions consists of 19 schools (gymnasiums) – internats for orphans and children deprived of parental care, of which 13 are subordinated to the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, and 6 are subordinated to administrative-territorial units.

Apart from this number, another 38 special education institutions exist, of which 19 are subordinated to the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, and 19 – to administrative-territorial units.

According to where the institutions are located, most of them – 11 at all – work in the Municipality of Chisinau, and all are funded from the local budget. In Cahul rayon there are 4 institutions, of which 3 are funded from the state budget, and one from the local budget. Hincesti and Floresti rayons each have 3 institutions, and all of them are subordinated to the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, being funded from the state budget.

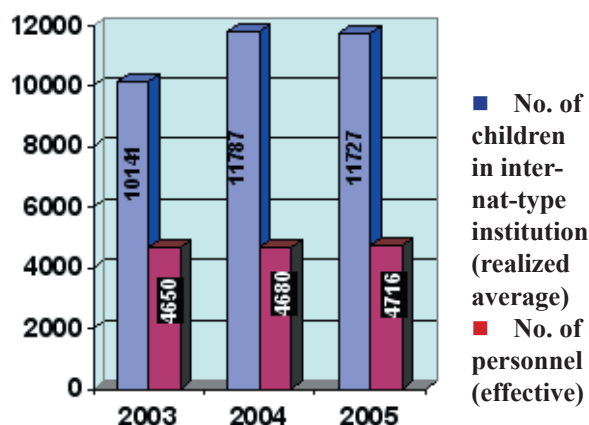
It should be noted that while the demographic trends show a decrease in the school population, the number of children placed in residential educational institutions tends to grow. Thus, if in 2003 the ratio of institutionalised children against the total number of children aged between 7 and 16 years was 1,7 %, then in 2004 and 2005 it grew to 2,1 and 2,2 correspondingly.

The growth in the number of children in residential institutions is followed by the growth in the number of personnel in these institutions, from 4650 persons in 2003, to 4680 in 2004, or, by 30 persons.

It can be discerned from Figure 2 that while the number of institutionalised children in 2005 dropped by 60 compared to the year 2004, the number of personnel increased by 36.

Figure 2

The number of children and the number of personnel in internat-type internat (persons)

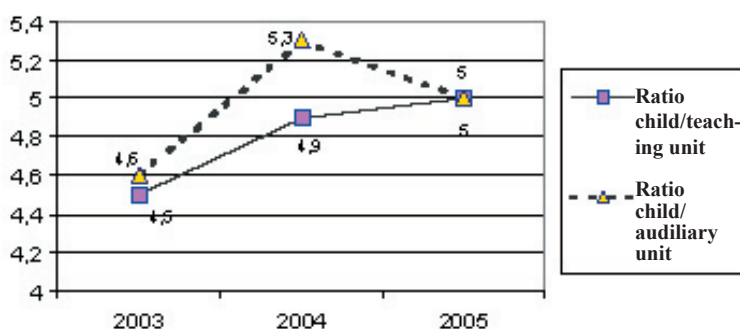


The ratio of children to one teaching unit registered a slight growth, from 4,5 in 2003 to 5 children in 2005. The number of children in relation to one auxiliary unit, as it can be noticed in Figure 3, reduced from 5,3 in 2004 to 5 children in 2005, becoming equal to the number of children in relation to one teaching unit.

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Figure 3

Ratio number of children to one teaching unit (auxiliary unit) in internat-type institutions

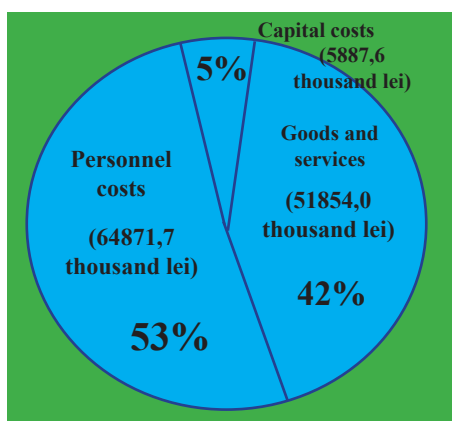


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Support of one child in residential care becomes more and more expensive each year. Thus, if in 2003 for supporting children in residential institutions the national public budget covered costs of 9,5 thousand lei, in 2005 this sum grew to 10,5.

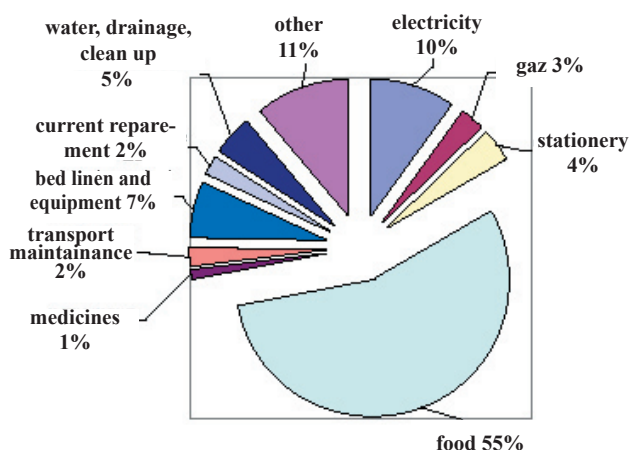
The structure of costs for the support of internat-type institutions in 2005, shown in Figure 5, reveals that the greatest part of expenditures are related to personnel (salary, compulsory state social insurance contributions and compulsory medical insurance). (without capital investments)

Figure 5
The structure of costs for internat-type institutions, according to the main types of costs, for the year of 2005



Of total costs on goods and services, the greatest part, 55% is spent on food (Figure 6), the other expenditures being beyond 11%

Figure 6
Total costs on goods and services, 2005



To sum up, the existing funding system has many drawbacks. In the chart below the main ones are shown, as well as some solutions of improving the existing situation.



PROBLEMS	POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS
<p>The existence of several structures of different levels that work in the area of childcare. This results in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Lack of a single policy in the area; ■ Duplication of the functions of central and local administration in the area of childcare; ■ Spread of financial resources and domination of departmental interest in obtaining budget sources to maintain the system in each structure ■ The use of public funds mainly to support the system that, year by year, becomes more and more expensive; ■ Absence of framework regulations for Social Assistance Centres, Maternal Centres, Day Centres for disabled children and for internat-type educational institutions; ■ Absence of minimum quality standards for day social assistance centres, maternal centres, day centres for disabled children and for internat-type educational institutions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ To determine a single central body within the Central Public Administration, which will be responsible for the promotion of the policy for child and family protection ■ To reform the system, establishing the general directions of the reform, promoting the principle "every child has the right to grow up in a family" ■ To review social benefits and to direct them towards vulnerable families. ■ To review the existing mechanism of funding and to align it with the directions of the reform and with the new policies in the area of childcare ■ To review the contingent of residential institutions beneficiaries ■ To analyse and review the categories of children placed in internat-type educational institutions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ► If there is a possibility to integrate the child in family, it would be possible to support the family, by redirecting a part of internat-type educational institution' budget allocations for food and clothes for the children; ► In cases where the integration and reintegration of children placed in internat-type schools is impossible; in order to integrate them in the society, as well as to increase the efficiency of public funds usage, the suggestion is that in the places where there are community schools and lyceums working simultaneously with residential institutions, institutionalised children should attend community schools. In this way the saved funds could be directed towards the improvement of community schools financing, or towards other needs.



THE MECHANISM FOR CHILD AND FAMILY SUPPORT

*Thesis from the speech of Victor MINDRU,
Vice-Minister of Health
and Social Protection*

Legal National Framework for Child and Family Social Protection

- Economic Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper.
- National Strategy on Child and Family Protection.
- Law on Social Assistance.
- Law on State Social Allowances for Certain Categories of People.
- Law on Special Social Protection of Certain Categories of the Population.

National Social Protection System for Families with Children

- Social contributions – money directed to the support of families with children in difficulty
- Social services – comprehensive set of measures and actions with a view to overcome situations of difficulty for the families with children.

Social Contributions

- Lump indemnity at the birth of the child – 800 lei;
- Monthly indemnity for childcare:
 - for uninsured persons in the range of 100 lei;
 - For insured persons - 20% from the calculation of social insurance indemnities, not less than 100 lei.
- Monthly indemnity for childcare aged between 1.5/3 and 16 in the range of 50 lei per month, based on the assessment of family income.

Social Contributions

- Monthly nominative compensations for the payment of utilities, to families with 4 children and more;
- Special allowances:
 - For children with disabilities, under 16;
 - For people disabled from the childhood;
 - For children under 18 on the loss of the bread-winner;
 - For care, for families who take care of disabled children of the first degree.
- Material aid from the Republican Fund or from the local fund for the social support of the population.

Social Services

- Childcare in residential institutions;
- Childcare in substitute protection services,

delivered through 3 centres: - for children with special educational needs „Speranta”, Criuleni city,

- for rehabilitation and social protection for children at risk „Пламъче”, Taraclia city,
- for temporary placement of children at risk “AZIMUT”, Soroca city.

□ Sanatorium treatment for children with disabilities, neuro-psychical and neuro-motor impairments.

□ For the prevention of child abandonment, delivered by «Materna» centre that accommodates young mothers in social difficulty for a maximum of 6 months.

□ Nutrition services in social support canteens for socially vulnerable categories, including families in need with children.

□ Humanitarian aid.

Reorganisation of Child and Family Social Protection System

■ Legislative framework, that would facilitate and regulate the social policy in the field

■ Institutional framework, that would coordinate and monitor the implementation of social policies

■ Financial framework, that would utilise the more efficient use of existing resources in the system and their targeting for the creation of new services

■ Human resources, professional social assistants, that would deliver services in the community based on principles of parental and family capacity building

■ Fulfillment of policies of the state in the field by developing partnership between state structures and civil society

Legislative Framework

■ Complex social policies in the field of child and family social protection based on the fundamental principles:

- the right of the child to a family;
- responsibility of the family to raise and bring up the own children;
- responsibility of the state to support the family.

Institutional Framework

National and territorial structure for the coordination and monitoring of child and family social protection components:

- Assessment and monitoring.
- Accreditation and confirmation of social services.

□ Attestation of professional competences.

□ Development of family policies and equal opportunities with competences:

- promotion and observation of the principle of equality of opportunity between women and men
- prevention and fight against domestic violence
- development and implementation of the national reference system for the protection and social assistance of victims and potential victims of human trafficking

Service Delivery System

■ Reassessment of the legal framework for the provision of social services

■ Development of community-based family-type services for social protection:

- gatekeeping service;
- family support and prevention of abandonment service;
- service of reintegration of children from residential institutions

Human Resources

■ Development of human resource building strategy:

- staff planning;
- staff training and re-training .

■ Creation of a network of professional social assistants at the community level.

■ Training of managers from the social protection system .

■ Continuous training of target groups with responsibility in the field of family and child protection:

- Specialists from the health field;
- Specialists from police bodies;
- Mass-media representatives, etc.

Raising Awareness

■ Preparation of the community for the reorganisation of the child social protection system:

- Realising the need of children's social integration by the community
- Assuming the commitment of the community to develop services that will meet local needs
- Encouraging the community with regard to solving the problems of the child and family in difficulty
- Organising events to share best practice between communities



DECENTRALIZATION OF CHILD PROTECTION SERVICES AND THE ROLE OF LPA IN THIS PROCESS

The goal of the creation of a new institutional legal framework is to determine the role and the place of local communities in a constitutional state. The role of sector three in this process is to contribute to the consolidation of local power, affirming local democracy, to contribute to the development of the principles of the European Book of Local Autonomy and of constitutional stipulations regarding the framework of local communities. The main focus of the recent reforms in local public administration was the decentralization of its functions and responsibilities, through a reorganization of local public administration bodies. The present reform of local public administration creates favorable conditions for the continuation of the decentralization process. The rights and responsibilities of the local public authorities were stipulated in the laws on the development and approval of local budgets, administration of local public funds, and administration of territorial-administrative units' property. At the same time, there is a range of serious problems that require mid-term and long-term solutions.

If we translate the notion of a reform in child protection into more simple language, I would say it means communities concern about the family and the child in difficulty. There are four residential institutions in the Cahul rayon: two special schools for disabled children, one for deaf children, and one gymnasium-internat. All in all there are about 500 institutionalized

children. Due to our fruitful collaboration with a number of partners in the area, especially with EveryChild Moldova, I think I won't exaggerate if I state that Cahul rayon is several steps ahead of other raions in this respect. We pay special attention to the integration of children in families, either biological, or foster. The reform or change of mentality and attitudes started three years ago, and we can already make some conclusions. Within the last 3 years, we managed to reintegrate 70 children into their families, and to place another 12 children in foster care. It is more important to prevent placement in residential care than to take a child out of an internat or other institution. It's like disease. The doctor will always say that prevention is both, cheaper and more efficient.

What is important for us, is the fact that in Cahul there was no mass institutionalization, like in other regions. Naturally, we work with each family separately, we explain to them our reasons, invite the parents for frank discussions, and, of course, within our possibilities, offer them financial support. About 150 families in Cahul received financial support. But one should know that the problem is not always limited to financial aspects. We have many families that did not receive financial aid, but, after discussion were persuaded to take their children home. They understood that at home the child will feel much better. Generally speaking, working with parents who, to put it mildly, do not quite perform

Petru BURLACU,
deputy president
of Cahul rayon



their parental duties, is very difficult and does not give immediate results. Our society will feel these results in the not too distant future.

In the three years I have mentioned above, 57 children were proposed for placement in special institutions, of which only 12 were accepted, whereas the rest of the children went to ordinary community schools.

Within "Capacity Building in Social Policy Reform" Project, Cahul region is a pilot region. The methodology of the implementing organization reflects the engagement to work in partnership with stakeholders and with the beneficiaries, promoting local capacity at all levels, and facilitating agencies cooperation.

Based on the decision of Cahul Rayon Council No. 03/09-1, of the 28.04.2005, Collaboration Agreement between the partners was signed, with regard to the implementation of "Capacity Building in Social Policy Reform" project, the following documents were approved:

- 1. Rayon Child's Rights Protection Strategy**
- 2. Regulations of organization methodology and functioning of Rayon Commission on Protection of the Rights of the Child in difficulty**
- 3. Regulations for placement in residential care of the child in difficulty**

Also, by a Decision of Cahul Rayon Council, The Child and Family Social Assistance Centre was created under the General Directorate for Education. Its goal is to assure the access of children and families in difficulty to quality social assistance services, as well as to undertake 50% of costs budgeted within the project for alternative services (Foster Care, Reintegration, Family Support), payment of allocations for families and salary payments for social assistants working within the Centre.

The Commission for the Protection of the Child in Difficulty was created, whose role is to monitor children's placement in the protection services in the rayon. Evaluation of each child in two internats was performed. As a result of this evaluation, 33 children from 27 families were reintegrated into their biological families. Within the Foster Care Service, 12 foster carers were approved and accepted children in placement.

A group of specialists examined thoroughly each case individually, as to

why the child was placed in the institution, who are his parents, what are his school records, what are the perspectives, and many other aspects. The evaluation team is made up of 7 educators, 3 social assistants and 1 supervisor. We make an individual plan for each child, to examine to best option for the child's integration into the family. Whenever possible, we go ahead, and if integration is found impossible, the child stays in the institution. This is our reality. Lately we have been doing more work with the children who come for placement, to find out more about the causes of the child leaving the family.

Opening a Day Centre is a real achievement for us, about which we are very happy, as on one hand we ease the parents' efforts, and on the other we offer children an equal opportunity for their development. Our day centre provides places for about 30 to 35 children from the community, who benefit from the services of our specialists and who have the possibility to use the equipment available in the Centre. We have defectologists, psychologists, speech therapists, and the whole team makes everything possible to offer better life chances for the children who have found themselves in a difficult situation. I will use this occasion to mention the organizations that



contributed to the opening of this centre – Cahul Raion Council – food, salary, building maintenance, UNICEF and EveryChild – reconstruction, equipment and furniture, training, and transport. In fact, we are more than a day centre, as much training for parents and social assistants is organized here.

Naturally, we have not managed to solve all the problems yet. It is painful to see 2 or 3 children staying only with their father or, even worse, with grandparents, old and weak, whereas their parents left the country to work abroad. Still, it is very important that we have started the process. It is important that we helped dozens of children regain their family. If local public authorities had the money the central government spends for internats, I assure you, there would be less children placed in residential care, and the number of children educated in their own families or in a family-type environment would increase considerably. We have demonstrated this in Cahul, and we consider that our experience may be useful and important for other raions in the south of Moldova.



Reorganisation of the child care system in the Republic of Moldova

Stela GRIGORAS,
EveryChild Moldova
Country Director



Fundamental principles of children's rights

The UN Convention stipulates:

- Children have the right to be raised in families
- Parents are responsible for the child's upbringing and education
- The government has responsibility for supporting parents to raise and educate their children.

Reform in the field is necessary, because residential care is very expensive, very accessible for all children and does not pay a lot of attention to the social problems of children. It is also a bad combination of care and educational services.

From the economic point of view, the situation is very critical, because residential services are like a sponge, which absorbs the majority of resources available in the country for education and social care. At the same time, residential services jeopardise children's development and welfare – of the future citizens of Moldova.

Launching the reorganisation process of the social care system of the child and family at risk. In each pilot region a Local Strategy for the reorganization of the child care system was elaborated, which was then approved by the Raion Councils.

Stages, included in the strategy

1. Increasing awareness of decision making bodies about the need to develop the child care system;

(Lessons learnt in the pilot regions – Orhei, Ungheni, Cahul)

2. Training professionals in the methodology of assessing the family and the child;

3. Preparing communities for the social integration of children;

4. Setting up priority groups of children for assessment and integration into the community;

5. Development of community-based services for children and families in difficulty;

6. Training qualified personnel in the system of care services for children and families;

7. Reorganisation of residential services according to minimum quality standards;

8. Development of financial mechanisms for the childcare system;

9. Change management – supporting managers in the process of implementing the strategy, their capacity building;

10. Implementation of a performance management system within community care services;

11. Creation of a contracting system for community-based services;

12. Development of an inspection and monitoring system for social services for children.

Local structure for reform

The Steering Committee, is composed of: Chair of Raion, vice-chair of raion, heads of department of Social Assistance and Family Protection, Department of Education, Youth and Sports, and the General directorate for finance, which has to monitor and assess the implementation of the strategy for the reorganization of the childcare system.

The strategy implementation team, composed of: vice-chair of the raion, head of general directorate for finance, head specialist in child's protection – representative of guardianship authority, director of Gymnasium-internat, specialist in protection of the family with children – supervisors of the assessment team, who deal with the identification of the children for assessment, for leading the assessment and planning meetings, and the monitoring and supervision of the assessment team.

The assessment and reintegration team comprises social assistants and educators from the internat. This team is responsible for: the child's assessment and development of the individual care plan; for supporting children and families in the process of reintegration; revising individual care plans; and reporting to the implementation team.



The reform of the childcare system at the local level includes the following strategic objectives:

The system of prevention is developed by creating committees on protecting the child in difficulty, by developing family support and family counselling services, developing day services, etc.

Residential institutions can be reorganized into general schools, into placement centres for children, and, if necessary, they can be closed.

Development and consolidation of services for the integration of the child in the family and society:

- Services for the reintegration of the child from the institution to the family
- National adoption
- Foster care
- Services for supporting young people in the post-institution period

Gate-keeping system

Implementation of the system for the prevention of the separation of the child from the family, by creating a semi-independent committee for the protection of the child in difficulty which works according to the following principles:

- The prevention system is an essential element in the process of reducing the number of children placed in residential institutions. It provides efficient implementation of the gate-keeping system by blocking non-suitable entrances into residential care, at the same time ensuring that children to be placed in the internat or outside the family are placed for a limited period only.
- This system changes the community's attitude towards the child's fate– from institutional care, to the child's care based in the family and community.
- The main objective of the gate-keeping system is to limit children's entrance into residential care by developing family support, community services and by changing people's paradigms of taking decisions on measures of social protection of the child.
- The secondary objective of the gate-keeping system is to ensure that children who enter the residential care system benefited from a comprehensive assessment of their needs and that they have care plans, which are according to their individual needs. These plans shall be reviewed on a regular basis.
- The gate-keeping system is an efficient tool for planning community-based services, empowering people, who are responsible for this process, to ensure a corresponding balance between supply and demand, and an efficient direction

of available resources.

• The Republic of Moldova has limited resources, which means that it needs an efficient direction of resources towards the most vulnerable people in society. This is why the gate-keeping system has the goal to provide services only to those people, who meet the specific eligibility criteria and therefore provide the most efficient use of the limited resources available. Using the comprehensive assessment procedure for the child will enable their needs to be met.

Some results of the implementation of the gate-keeping system for children in the pilot regions

- For 75% of children, institutionalization was prevented as a result of the panel for the protection of children in difficulty and the provision of family support services.
- 15 % of children were reintegrated in their birth or extended families, another 15% are still in the process of reintegration.
- A reduction in the number of 1st grade children in the internats.

Difficulties in the development of prevention service for children in the community

This system was created in only three pilot regions, on the basis of regulations approved by the raion councils. So, this regulation deals only with children from this raion. In the pilot regions the amount of children in the institutions from the region was decreasing but, the flow of children from other regions increased 2.5 times. Taking this into consideration there is a need to make the gate-keeping system work on the national level.

The following community-based services were created in the pilot regions for families and children in difficulty:

- Family support service, which has the goal of preventing the family's breaking up and to prevent children's placement in residential institutions;
- Reintegration service for children from residential institutions in their biological or extended families;
- Foster care service, which provides the child in difficulty with substitutive care in the family of the foster carer, based on limited rights and obligations regarding the protection of the child's legal rights and interests between the territorial guardianship authority and the foster carer.

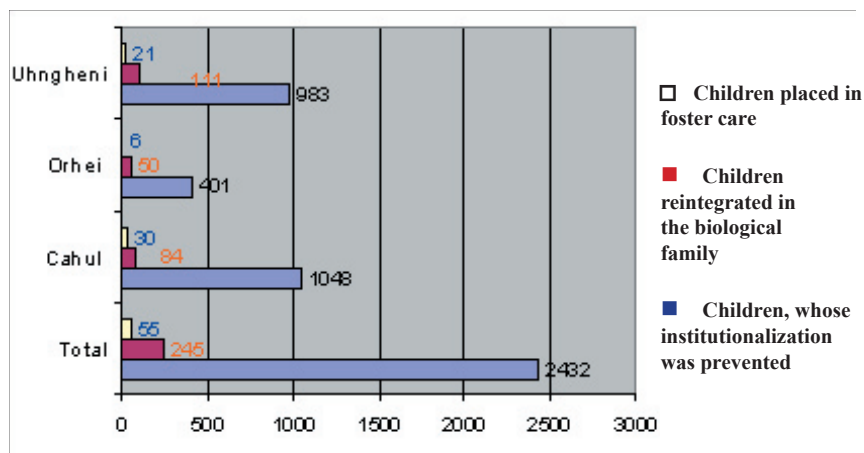
The raion departments of social assistance and family protection, created Centres for the Social Assistance of Families and Children in difficulty. The creation of this structure aims to integrate the services in the structure of local public authorities. Based on the raion organigram, centres for social assistance of families and children were created by the Departments of Social Assistance and family protection.

The centres included the above mentioned services, and 5-8 social assistants, a psychologist and other specialists, who offer special services to children and families in difficulty.

Accomplishments in development of community-based services for families and children in difficulty.

- The prevention of the institutionalization of 2432 children from 915 families, through the family support service.
- The reintegration of 245 children from residential institutions in their biological or extended families.
- 55 children were placed in foster care in order to deinstitutionalize them or to prevent their institutionalization.

(Continued on p.18)



(Continued from p.17)

Difficulties in the development of social services for children and families in difficulty

- Lack of social assistants in the community makes children's monitoring in the post-reintegration phase more difficult. It also makes early identification of children and families in difficulty very difficult.

- Imperfect legislative framework (lack of regulations and quality standards for all social services), approved by the government, and the lack of financial mechanisms, according to which "the money shall follow the child", makes it difficult for the local public authorities to take over social services and impossible to monitor and assess the quality of services provided.

- Massive turnover of personnel in social assistance, which is triggered by the low salaries of the social assistants (who are, by the way, people with higher education), endanger the continuity of service provision.

- No notion of foster carer in the nomenclature of professions makes difficult for the local public authorities to take over this service. This is very important, as this service is a good alternative to the child's institutionalisation.

Reorganisation of the residential childcare system

A very important stage in the process of the reorganisation of the internat is the **assessment of the institution**. Orhei internat was assessed from the following points of view:

- Educational process;
- Child care services in the gymnasium and the community;
- Human Resources from Internat;
- Financial resources;
- Internat's real estate.

Categories of children, who are placed in residential institutions (see fig. 1)

General conclusions of the assessment:

Educational services, provided by the gymnasium-internat from Orhei are of almost the same quality as any other mainstream school in the



raion, although there is no evidence that the internat is necessary for educational reasons.

The Gymnasium-internat in Orhei does not provide social services adequate to residents' needs, i.e. for the children who are considered to be vulnerable. Actually, it has been proved that this institution does not provide services for vulnerable children or for children from the community.

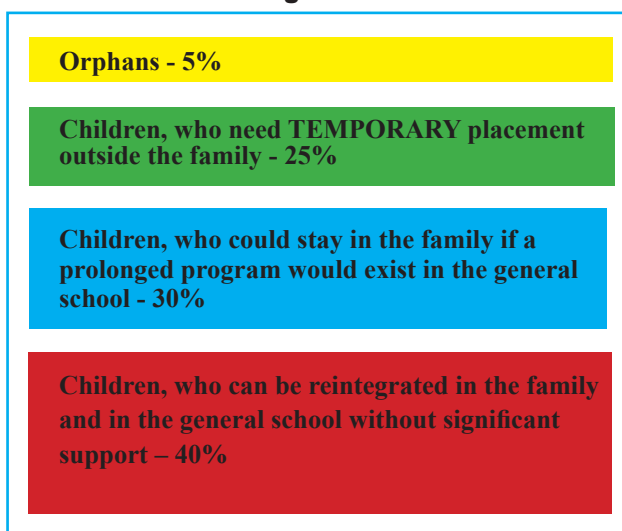
The services, provided within Orhei internat are more expensive than the same services, which are provided in the community. The buildings and territory of the Internat are inefficiently used and they need capital investments in order to correspond to all the necessary conditions. It was observed that capital investments in the internat depend on the contributions of donors. This is why the investments and maintenance programmes which were planned are not sustainable.

Taking into account the above, the following conclusion was reached: further activity of Orhei internat cannot be justified from the social and educational points of view. Also we cannot ignore the financial part of this problem. This is why we need to take a strategic decision, which would allow us to reinvest in educational and social community-based services.

In order to support developed processes at the local level, the following measures are necessary:

- Development of a **National Strategy for the reorganisation of the childcare system.**
- **Decentralisation of the social services system** and empowerment of local public authorities in the process of implementation at the local level.
- Creation of a national gate-keeping system.
- **Creation of financial mechanisms for the re-direction of human and financial resources** from the residential childcare system to community-based services.
- Reorganization of the residential childcare system by introducing quality standards and dividing the educational process from the care process.
- **Creation of assessment and accreditation system for the providers of social services**, which would be provided both by the state and NGOs sector.
- **Creation of the system for monitoring and inspection of social services**, based on minimal quality standards for all the types of services.

Figure 1



The role of NGOs in reforming the child protection system

Daniela SIMBOTEANU-POPESCU,
Chair of the Alliance of NGOs working in the field of social protection of children and families



We acknowledge the fact that the situation of many children in Moldova is unfavourable. The official statistical data is alarming: four in ten children under the age of 10 live in extreme poverty, about 23,000 children were left without the care of both parents, because they left to work abroad, and about 13,000 children are placed in residential institutions run by the state; the numbers of cases of violence against children are growing, and more and more often we find out about the involvement of children in organised crime and many other problems.

Therefore, we would like to mention the fact that non-governmental organisations working in this field express their wish and availability to collaborate with central and local public authorities in order to address these problems, to jointly develop an efficient system of child protection.

Thus, NGOs work in a number of directions, such as: the development of social policies; the improvement of the legislation in the field; human resource training and development; raising public awareness; and not least, the development of community based services for families and children.

Analysing the recent years' experience of partnership between the state and non-governmental organisations working in the field of child protection, we can find a number of best practices, due to which the lives of specific children and families improved and the capacity of the current system was built.

Thus, on the basis of our own experience and the experience of other countries, we see that NGO's play an active part in the modern system of child protection.

In this context, I would like to single out a number of important roles NGOs play:

The role of NGOs in the provision of services for children and families

During recent years NGOs have created a number of different services for children at risk, which proved to be efficient and cost-effective.

Community based social services, developed by the NGO sector, are in line with European norms. These models were adapted to our reality then tested, and we are now at a stage when these services need to be analysed by the authorities, incorporated into social policy and put forward for replication at a national level.

The services created allow the prevention of many of the problems faced by children and the prompt tackling of problems faced at the community level without having to remove the child from the family (because the family is the best place for the upbringing and education of the child).

The decrease in the numbers of children in difficulty and the significant decrease in the need for the placement of children in

residential institutions can be ensured only by the availability of sustainable community based services. But the problem is the dependence of NGOs on financing coming from outside donors. The donors' pattern of funding a service is for the period of its setup, after which they leave, wishing to see its sustainability. Once that funding stops, a service obviously gets into difficulty.

It is exactly here that one of the most necessary forms of collaboration between the state and non-profit organisations fits in – delegation of duties and the commissioning of NGOs to provide services. Even if we already have a number of examples of support being provided to NGO services in Moldova, they are most likely to be just nice exceptions. We need to acknowledge that there are a number of impediments in this respect:

- There is no system for the accreditation of services, which are provided in the field of child and family protection, including services provided by NGOs.

- There are no quality standards for social services. This issue not only endangers the development of community-based services, but it also endangers beneficiaries' welfare, because there is no set standard for one service or another. And if there are no standards, then an efficient system of monitoring and inspection of services, provided by the state and by the NGO sector, cannot be created. These are necessary for checking the appropriateness of public investments and of the donors' investments; also to assess the impact of these services on beneficiaries.

- There are no legal provisions, which would regulate the process of contracting or supporting quality services provided by NGOs



(for example "The Law of One Percent", etc.). This would provide the sustainability of services and development of new models for services, which are necessary for the community.

The role of NGOs in promotion of social policies in the interest of the family and the child, and in the promotion of mechanisms, which are necessary for the implementation of these policies

Lately, the access of NGOs to the elaboration process of legislation and normative acts' in the field, increased. So, NGOs were very active in the elaboration of the National Strategy on Child and Family protection, of the Strategy "Education for All", the Law on Social Assistance, The National Action Plan in the field of human rights, etc. The partnership in this field resulted in mutual acquaintance and in mutual learning. The experience, which was accumulated, is very valuable and we hope to have a very efficient collaboration in the future in the following fields:

- Promotion of policies on raising and educating the child in the family
- Elaboration and usage of a system of monitoring the respecting of human rights
- Reform of the Institutional framework for protecting the child

We also consider very useful the NGOs experience in organization of campaigns for increasing public awareness regarding the issues of protecting children and families. Only in partnership, can we successfully carry out this activity of social mobilisation.

As a member of the National Council on Protecting Children Rights, APSCF will continue to promote these ideas and to consolidate the partnership with Local and Central public authorities.

We, as NGO's from the field, consider ourselves part of the system of protecting the child. We consider that our main role is to support the state in solving the problems faced by children and families in our country.

RESOLUTION

OF THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE

SOCIAL DIMENSIONS OF THE CHILD

PROTECTION SYSTEM IN MOLDOVA

We, the participants of the National Conference "Social Dimensions of the Child Protection System in Moldova" salute the initiative of the President Vladimir Voronin to launch the discussion on the actual situation in the child protection field in the Republic of Moldova.

The results of the economic progress registered lately, have not been distributed equitably so that they had a positive impact on the situation of children from the most vulnerable groups. The difference between children's situation and opportunities from the villages and the cities increased as did the situation of children from vulnerable families and those from better off families, children from families with many children and those from smaller families. At the same time there is a substantial increase in the number of children deprived of parental care because of migration, abandonment and neglect.

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 the parents towards their children and that of the state to support the families regarding their upbringing and education,

We declare the following:

- *There are many categories of marginalised children, prisoners of the chain of poverty and invisible to the child protection system;*

- *The child and family protection system is fragmented, inefficient and has a limited capacity to meet children's needs, especially the most vulnerable;*

- *There is a lack of efficient family support services that would prevent crisis situations as well as separation from the family;*

□ The resources allocated for social benefits for vulnerable families are limited; their targeting is inefficient and does not ensure the inclusion of the most vulnerable members of society in these programmes.

□ At the Primaria (town hall) level, especially in rural areas, there is a lack of social workers although the poverty profile shows us that the poorest children are in the villages.

□ There is a lack of protection services at the community level.

□ Mainstream schools, preschool institutions as well as the community do not encourage the inclusion of children with special needs, those with disabilities or with learning difficulties.

- The child care in residential institutions is the predominant form of child protection, the placement of children being easy:

□ Institutionalisation has long-term negative effects on the development of children and the entire society.

□ Residential care is more expensive in comparison to community prevention and protection services.

□ The children who leave residential institutions are often deprived of any form of protection. There are no efficient programmes and services to protect and enable the social integration of these children.

- There is no monitoring system both of the situation of vulnerable children and of the services of child protection.

As a result we consider that reform of the entire child and family protection system is imperative.

Being convinced that a family is the best environment for the life and harmonious development of the child, we, the participants at this conference, representing governmental structures, non-governmental organisations and international organisations, plead for the following priority actions within the reform of the system of social protection for children and which will contribute to their realisation:

1. Setting up a specialised structure, at the central and local level with full authority in child protection and adequate financial and human resources that would ensure its efficient activity.

2. Setting up of the National Network of Social Workers that would include all rural areas and would contribute

to the prevention of the separation of children from the family and infringement of their rights and will facilitate access of the most vulnerable categories to the social work programmes, basic and specialised services.

3. The development of community services concentrated on the needs of children and families.

4. Reorganisation of the residential child care system so that:

□ It provides care only to those categories of children, for whom staying in the biological family is not in their best interests and for whom the forms of family type protection have not been identified at the community level.

□ The institution becomes one of a new type similar to the family environment which provides diversified quality services, the ultimate purpose being the reintegration of children with the family and community.

□ The employees of the institutions are supported to become principal players in the reorganisation, contributing with their experience, professionalism and commitment, being further involved either in the transformed residential institutions or the creation of other types of services for children.

Within this reform:

We commit ourselves regarding the problems the children of Moldova face at the present time.

We are determined to work in close collaboration for the promotion and protection of child's rights.

We will act for these rights to become the norms of thinking as well as civic and professional behaviour and to be implemented by everybody, by each of us. Mass media has an important role to promote these values continuously.

**The Republic of Moldova
has to become a
MOLDOVA WITH AND FOR
CHILDREN**