CHILD TRAFFICKING: 
THE CASE OF MOLDOVA
CHILD TRAFFICKING: THE CASE OF MOLDOVA.
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CHILD TRAFFICKING: THE CASE OF MOLDOVA.
THE SITUATION OF CHILDREN AND WOMEN: FACTS AND FIGURES

Background

The Republic of Moldova is situated in central Europe, bordering Ukraine to the north, east and south and Romania to the west. The capital of the country is Chisinau. The total territory of the country is 337,000 sq km. Moldova is one of the most densely populated countries in Europe.

The transition from state-controlled to a market economy has created a serious economic depression. Children and young people are suffering the most, as almost 30 per cent of the total population, 4,380,000, are children under-18.

The relative political stability that followed the formation of a majority communist government in 2001 is periodically shaken by harsh public debates over Moldova’s strategic orientation either towards the European Union or the CIS, the settlement of the Transnistrian separatist dispute, and the withdrawal of Russian military forces.

The Moldovan economy has resumed growth, but it is a long way from recouping the losses of the last decade. Poverty is widespread and population out-migration continues, with ensuing stress on families and children left behind. There is no foreseeable prospect of significant improvement in the economic conditions of vulnerable groups of chil-
CHILD TRAFFICKING: THE CASE OF MOLDOVA

dren and women. Trafficking of women and children remains a serious issue and present control efforts do not appear to have reduced the scale of the problem.

**Living standards**

Living standards for both women and children have declined as a result of the upheavals in a country which now ranks as one of the poorest nations in the Central and Eastern Europe and CIS. The 2003 Human Development Report ranks Moldova 108 out of 173 countries by quality of life and living standards, which is lower than previous years (104 in 1999 and 105 in 2002) and much below the Eastern Europe and CIS averages; Moldova ranks 25th out of 26 countries in the region, followed only by Tajikistan.

Even though Moldova is in its third year of recovery after the decade-long decline, the current growth is not yet sustainable over the medium term, and the country faces severe problems due to its large foreign debt service burden. Poverty remains common, with a GDP per capita at about USD 430, or about 40 per cent of the 1990 pre-independence level GDP. Moldova has registered a steady GDP growth in the last three years with a total of 16.4 per cent throughout 2000-2002 and 7 per cent over the nine months of 2003.

The minimal consumption basket for December 2003 was officially estimated at 1177 lei (84 USD). Doctors, teachers, and social workers earned 600 lei on average, an amount that covered just 47 percent of the minimal consumption basket. Poverty remains very high, even though its rate slightly decreased in 2002 and 2003. According to recent data 40.4 per cent of people live below the absolute poverty line (estimated at 270.67 lei [20 USD] per adult per month) in 2002, while every fourth resident was considered to be extremely poor: 26.2 per cent were below the food poverty line.

**Unemployment, Migration and Trafficking**

Resumed economic growth has not translated yet into increased employment. According to the ILO, the unemployment rate is at least 12 per cent, while official statistics show a 6.6 per cent unemployment rate. When compared to the estimated 500-600 thousand people who left to work abroad (which is at least 20 percent of the population), both figures prove to be greatly underestimated. Youth, including those with higher education, account for the great majority of unemployed. Half of those who went abroad in search of a job are younger than 30. The government’s policy towards the labour market has been ineffective. The number of jobs created by Employment Centres has been negligible in comparison with the actual number of jobless people.

Political instability and social unrest due to continued economic hardship have led to a steady outflow of Moldovan labour to foreign labour markets, which has been steadily growing for the last 5-6 years. Migration of as many as 600-800 thousand Moldovans, estimated to be around 30 percent of the active population, deprives the local economy
of labour and initiative. However, it also results in remittances amounting to USD 250-300 million annually, or about 15 per cent of GDP.

Moldova remains one of the main countries of origin for trafficking in women and children because of its geographical location and current economic situation, as well as the poor social situation, weak rule of law and rampant corruption. It is also a transit country for trafficking from Ukraine and other countries of the former Soviet Union. Deep rooted gender-based discrimination in society, extreme poverty and violence, push young women to migrate. Those who have contacts and money use safe, though still illegal ways, paying for the services of legitimate “travel agencies”. Young women, who do not have money, make arrangements with traffickers resulting in an increase in cross-border and national trafficking in women and girls.

The majority of trafficked women and girls come from rural areas (50 per cent) and poor (60 per cent) or very poor (17 per cent) families and are lured by false promises of well-paid jobs abroad. The trafficker uses the pretext of an employment recruiter and arranges documentation and travel across one or more international boundaries. Recruiting networks are well organized and from initial recruitment to arrival in the country of destination, traffickers may sell the young woman two or more times. Fear on the part of the victim to speak out about their experiences, inadequate legislation including the absence of provisions to prosecute traffickers and lack of appropriate mechanisms to enforce existing legal provisions means that these networks are able to operate with impunity.
Traffickers recruit women and girls through different strategies:

- Direct contact, when women and girls, or their families, are approached by traffickers. Often traffickers are women from the same village who previously worked as prostitutes or have been trafficked abroad and became traffickers. Often the family is paid money in advance and the woman or girl is expected to earn the advance back and pay the family’s debts.

- Press advertisements offering jobs abroad. Advertisements directed at young women offer jobs as waitresses or house help, but more often bluntly inform that jobs are for those willing to work in the sex industry.

- Tourist agencies offer full migration services from arranging passports and Schengen visas to transportation and work contracts. There are more than 3,000 tourist agencies, of which only some 140 have an official license to operate.

- Job agencies. Out of total 100 job agencies, only fourteen have official licenses and hire mostly men for construction work. Only three agencies offer jobs to women as waitresses and nurses. Others offer illegal work. Some of these enterprises are run by organized crime groups and operate as covers for trafficking.

- There are also marriage agencies and Internet services used by traffickers though not very popular.

Debt bondage is a tactic often used by traffickers to keep young women enslaved under the pretence of repaying her accumulated debt. The young woman also suffers physical and psychological abuse, repeated
rape, and threats to her and her family’s safety and other coercive techniques in order to ensure her cooperation. By increasing the woman’s debts owed to the trafficker through medical treatment, accommodation, resale to other “bar owners”, etc, she finds it increasingly difficult to repay her accumulated debt and must continue to provide sexual services to reduce the amount owed.

Trafficked women and children face also numerous health risks. In particular they are exposed to sexually transmitted infections (STIs), other reproductive tract infections (RTIs), unplanned pregnancies and physical traumas from severe beatings. Many trafficked victims, especially minors, suffer severe psychological problems due to the abuse they have suffered.

The system of return and reintegration has improved but is not yet working well as it requires a full provision of support, services and security to ensure that women and girls are not caught up in a circle of repeated trafficking. The capacity of psychologists or social workers has also improved but additional training is needed. Long-term reintegration programmes – professional skills training, educational opportunities, and micro-credits systems are also needed.

The Government is beginning to acknowledge more fully the dimension and impact of trafficking in human beings. Following the recommendations of the Stability Pact for South East Europe Anti-Trafficking Task Force, in November 2001 the Government appointed a high ranking Governmental coordinator for all actions undertaken to fight human trafficking, formed the National Committee to Combat Trafficking and adopted a National Plan of Action. Four sub-working groups in the area of prevention, protection, prosecution and child trafficking have since been established.

Social policies reform

In June 2003, as a result of a participatory consultation process, and with UNICEF’s technical assistance, the Government adopted a National Strategy on Family and Child Protection. The document addresses the major child protection components: legal framework, institutional framework, capacity building, community services and financial resources. A steering group has been established under the National Council for the Protection of Child Rights, which is now coordinating the elaboration of the National Plan of Action for Family and Child Protection.

A 2003 UNICEF assessment of the social and economic problems in two counties identifies specific patterns of social problems and risks which affect the wellbeing of children and families. According to its key findings, against the background of a family in deep crisis, the central issue became the marginal position of the child and his problems inside the family. Children are formally abandoned by their parents (13,500 institutionalized children in Moldova), emotionally abandoned by migrant parents, exploited as labour force in the household or even
as agricultural/occasional workers for local employers (especially in rural areas). Domestic violence against children is broadly accepted inside the family and even at school.

The crisis of family support for the child is accompanied by the ineffectiveness of the state’s social policies and in most areas the lack of civil society support for children. The fragmentation of responsibilities, institutions and resources in the system of child protection at national and regional/local levels is one of the main problems. The 2003 administrative reform deepened this crisis, by delegating responsibilities without allocating resources, especially for the new raions (counties). As a result, in the small towns and isolated villages there are no institutions and human resources responsible for child protection.
BASIC STATISTICS ON CHILDREN AND WOMEN

### BASIC INDICATORS OF CHILD SURVIVAL

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under-five mortality rate</td>
<td>25.2</td>
<td>27.4</td>
<td>23.3</td>
<td>18.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Infant mortality rate</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>21.2</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>14.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maternal mortality rate</td>
<td>51.9</td>
<td>40.8</td>
<td>27.1</td>
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### DEMOGRAPHIC INDICATORS

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total population</td>
<td>4,352.7</td>
<td>4,334.4</td>
<td>4,264.3</td>
<td>4,274.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Population aged 0-18 years</td>
<td>1,419.7</td>
<td>1,386.4</td>
<td>1,107.1</td>
<td>1,078.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Population aged 0-5 years</td>
<td>438,427</td>
<td>337,905</td>
<td>228,982</td>
<td>246,899</td>
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<tr>
<td>Life expectancy at birth, years</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>male</td>
<td>65.8</td>
<td>67.4</td>
<td>68.05</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>female</td>
<td>69.7</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>71.7</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Fertility rate per 100 women aged 15-19</td>
<td>58.7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>40</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total fertility rate per 1 women of reproductive age</td>
<td>2.39</td>
<td>1.39</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Crude birth rate per 1,000 population</td>
<td></td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Crude death rate per 1,000 population</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>12.2</td>
<td>11.5</td>
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<td>Population annual growth rate per 1,000 population</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>-1.7</td>
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### ECONOMIC INDICATORS

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<tr>
<td>GDP per capita US$</td>
<td>400</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>430</td>
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<td>Real GDP growth %</td>
<td>-1.4</td>
<td>2.1</td>
<td>7.2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Population absolute poverty</td>
<td>37(1997)</td>
<td>58.5(1999)</td>
<td>40.4</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Unemployment % of labor force</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public expenditures on social services % of GDP</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>12.4</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>External state debt % of GDP</td>
<td>57.2</td>
<td>77.4</td>
<td>54.6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Average inflation rate</td>
<td>30.2</td>
<td>31.3</td>
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UNICEF - GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA
Country Programme of Cooperation
2002 – 2006

The overall goal:
To support national efforts to alleviate poverty and fulfil the rights of children, young people and women according to the principles of the Convention for the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). The Country Programme consists of three inter-related programmes based on a life-cycle approach:

I. Early Child Care and Development (ECCD),
II. Child Protection, and
III. Young People Health, Development and Participation (YPHDP):

I. Early Childhood Care and Development Programme

Goal:
Contribute to the attainment of the highest achievable standards of health, nutrition, and psycho-social development in children under the age of seven with a special emphasis on the most vulnerable by improving access to basic health services, promoting family centred care, family education, and fostering the development of integrated ECD policies.
Objectives:

- To promote cost-effective and efficient mother and child health (MCH) care services;
- To contribute to the development of public health capacities and an accessible, qualitative and sustainable Primary Health Care (PHC) system;
- To increase access and improve the quality of early childhood development practices.

The Mother and Child Health project addresses three critical stages of the lifecycle: pregnancy, birth and childhood. Basic interventions promoted under this project include prenatal care and care at birth, immunisation, nutrition, Integrated Management of Childhood Illnesses (IMCI) – so-called “best buys”: the most effective measures in improving maternal and child health. Selection of the “best buys” was based on the key determinants of health and disease in the Republic of Moldova.

Improving prenatal and delivery care, including care of obstetric emergencies, represent important aspects of UNICEF activities in Moldova. The main objectives are reducing maternal and infant mortality and morbidity. This is achieved by: building strong political and grassroots support for perinatal care programme; strengthening the capacity of health care providers to deliver quality health care and drawing additional attention to the needs of families and children; improving managerial capacities and strengthening perinatal care surveillance system; implementing health promotion and communication activities targeting families and communities and aiming at reducing risky practices and promoting positive ones.
**Immunisation** is acknowledged to be among the most cost-effective and highest-impact health interventions that has had a major impact in reducing the burden of disease. Moreover, it contributes to narrowing the burden of disease gap between the richest and poorest segments of the population. Major components of the immunisation project are as follows: ensuring uninterrupted supply of vaccines, syringes and safety boxes for the National Immunisation Programme; improving quality and safety of immunisation services; strengthening managerial skills of the EPI workers; fortifying vaccine preventable surveillance system; and promoting public trust in vaccines.

Adequate nutrition is considered to be a cornerstone of poverty reduction. The **Nutrition** component of the MCH project aims at eliminating Iodine Deficiency Disorders and reducing anaemia prevalence among pregnant women and children. Core strategies to prevent and reduce micro-nutrient deficiencies include promotion of universal salt iodisation and flour fortification with iron. These will be complemented by iron and folic acid supplementation of pregnant women and children under 5.

**Integrated Management of Childhood Illness** encompasses interventions in the health care system, in the community, and at home aiming at reducing childhood deaths, illnesses, and disability and improving children’s growth and development. IMCI strategy improves health workers’ skills as well as family and community practices related to child health and nutrition, and strengthens the health care system for effective management of childhood illnesses.

The **Health System Development project** aims at increasing access to quality healthcare services. This is done via continuous advocacy and technical support for the development of the Basic Benefit Package of health services and integration into the package of a number of interventions: prenatal and delivery care, IMCI, immunisation etc. Capacity building of public health professionals and healthcare managers complements this. Altogether this contributes to financial and programmatic sustainability of UNICEF supported projects in aforementioned areas.

UNICEF plays a leading role in the Task Force for Health Reform, as well as in developing the National Surveillance System for Mother and Child Health Care. In close co-operation with the Health Investment Fund of the World Bank Health Reform Project, UNICEF supports the implementation of a number of projects in the area of primary health care.

The **Early Childhood Development project** focuses on promoting integrated approach to early childhood. It views survival, growth and development of young children as mutually inter-dependent dimensions and promotes multi-disciplinary and cross-sectoral approach to early childhood. The goal of the Project is to improve young children’s health and development by improving family and community knowledge and practices in the area of early childhood care and development.
II. Child Protection Programme

Goal:
Contribute to the development of protection measures for children and adolescents and their families, with special attention to the most vulnerable, by improving policies, promoting community based services and families’ empowerment.

Objectives:

- To support Government efforts in social sector reform by building capacities, improving policies and legislative frameworks that address the protection of children and adolescents at risk and their families.
- To contribute to a reduction in the number of children in institutions and prevent institutionalisation by developing new models of child protection services, promoting inclusive education, and strengthening community-family capacities to protect and provide for their own children.
- To advocate for the full implementation of children’s rights by building national and local capacities for the monitoring of CRC and CEDAW.

Policy Development component supports the development of adequate social policies for family and child protection, efficient social service delivery, appropriate legislation and a legal framework. An integral part of the social sector reform is reforming the Child Public Care System through: development and implementation of policies for children with disabilities and those with other special needs; integra-
tion of such children into mainstreaming schooling; transforming institutional care into a community-based system; and family reintegration and education.

Law enforcement mechanisms for child protection and social service delivery are promoted and supported through capacity building efforts in social work and counselling services, which at present do not exist in the country.

**Social Services Development component** concentrates on community development and participation and technical assistance to piloted areas in order to ensure adequate protection measures for neglected, abused, exploited, abandoned and homeless children, including children victims of trafficking and children in conflict with the law. Critical technical support is being provided to local authorities, NGOs, parents associations and families for developing community based social services, day care centres and alternative models for children in residential care, school-based social services for children at risk of marginalisation.

### III. Young People’s Health, Development and Participation Programme

**Goal:**

Contribute to the meaningful participation of young people in decisions that affect their lives, and to the improvement of their health and development.

**Objectives:**

- To develop young people’s capacity to claim their rights, to adopt responsible behaviour, and to actively participate in decision-making processes.
- To promote friendly environments conducive to increased youth participation in their own health and development issues.
- To improve the access of young people to social and health services, and improve the quality of these services.

**Young People Participation component** promotes initiatives that allow young people to express freely their opinions, to gain awareness of their rights and to contribute to their fulfilment. Projects and activities, such as local youth councils, children’s and youth parliaments, youth media groups, are being implemented. There is a range of entry points for strengthening and developing young people’s participation such as peer activities, civil education and national youth movements. UNICEF also promotes the establishment of safe and enabling spaces for adolescents in the main cities of Moldova.
**Youth Health and Development component** supports youth friendly health services in order to increase young people’s access to, and use of health services by providing quality, user-friendly affordable services and supplies for young people’s priority diseases and health problems. Services include access to preventive methods, confidential and voluntary counselling, and testing for HIV/AIDS. The development of ‘youth-friendly’ criteria, as well as implementing actions to improve friendliness of services are important programme components.

Peer education is being supported in order to augment positive behaviour patterns (abstinence from sex, ability to say no to sex, condom use, care/counselling seeking) among young people, aged 10 – 24. Activities also target professionals (teachers, mayors, community leaders, and family doctors) as well as volunteer groups and youth associations.

Communication strategies aim at promoting HIV/AIDS awareness and healthy lifestyles, addressing stigma and discrimination.
CHILD PROTECTION PROGRAMME

2002 - 2006

Programme Goal

To contribute to the development of protection measures for children, adolescents and their families by addressing emerging problems and needs.

Programme Objectives

- To support the Government efforts in social sector reform by building capacities, improving policies and legislative frameworks that affect the protection of children and adolescents at risk, including their families;
- To advocate for the full implementation of children’s rights by building national and local capacities for monitoring the CRC and CEDAW;
- To contribute to a reduction in the number of children in institutions and prevent institutionalization by developing new models of child protection services, promoting inclusive education and strengthen communities/families capacities to protect and provide for their own children.

Programme coverage and beneficiaries

The Child Protection Programme will develop activities at both the national and local levels. In particular, the activities implemented at the national level will focus on reforming social policies, adjusting legislative frameworks and increasing institutional capacities for impacting the overall population, children, families and professionals involved in the area of social protection.
At the local level, pilot districts will be selected for the development of cost effective, integrated social services. Selected NGOs will enhance their capacity to deliver services and to advocate on behalf of disadvantaged children; in close coordination with the Better Parenting Project, families will be empowered to take an active role and participate in their children’s education, care and protection. The districts will be selected using criteria such as vulnerability, receptiveness of local authorities, existing professional networks, interaction with NGOs, youth organizations and partnerships with other donors. The beneficiary groups will include children living in residential institutions, at risk of being abandoned or institutionalized, abandoned at birth, with disabilities, abused and/or neglected, adolescents leaving institutions, and children or young people in conflict with the law.

I. Policy Development Project

Project Objectives

- To ensure the development and full implementation of a social protection policy for families and children at national and local level.

Project Partners

UNICEF will work closely with the National Council for Child Rights Protection, the Parliamentarian Committee for Social Policy, the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of Health, local administrations and Departments of Child Protection, national and international NGOs and Universities. Close coordination and collaboration with key donors involved in this specific area will be strengthened, in particular with DFID, SIDA, TACIS (EU), and the Social Investment Fund of the World Bank.

Legislative and Policy Reform

Sub-project Objectives

- To improve national legislation, regulations, norms and standards for child protection;
- To support the institutional reform for child protection at national and local levels.

Activities

- Strengthen the coordinating role, functions and responsibilities of the National Council for the Protection of Children’s Rights through technical assistance and capacity building activities;
- Support to the establishment of Local Councils on Child Protection within each district;
Support the capacity-building process of the Local Councils for developing integrated social policies in accordance with specific local priorities that interface with those of the National Council;

Support dialogue, exchange of information and coordination at local levels between the Local Councils for the Protection of Children’s Rights, political and administrative authorities, NGOs and youth organizations;

Assist in the creation of a National Strategy for the Social Protection Reform, with special emphasis on child and family protection;

Promote and coordinate the activities of a Task Force, that includes donors, NGOs and government representatives for the development of a five-year action plan for the implementation of the national strategy;

Provide technical assistance for the development of standards of care for children in residential care and in community-based alternative services;

Provide technical assistance for the revision of the national legislation, norms and regulations in accordance with CRC and CEDAW;

Revise the national and international adoption mechanisms and procedures and recommend new changes and monitoring mechanisms.

Social Work Development Sub-Project

Sub-project objectives

To contribute to the development of a Social Work system, counseling and probation;

To promote and enhance social work skills and knowledge among “agents of change” working at local level.
**Activities**

- Provide technical support to the Social Work Resource Centers in Universities for developing activities related to curriculum development, training packages and teaching materials;
- Provide technical assistance to pedagogical colleges in pilot areas to propose changes to curricula, train social pedagogues and community social workers according to new standards;
- Support universities for developing techniques for distance education in social work and probation services;
- Carry out workshops, seminars, training courses for academics and practicing staff on foster care procedures, family counseling, probation, integration and reintegration of young offenders, community development on poverty reduction strategies and so on.
- Support in-service training activities for professionals of the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family;
- Promote and advocate for the establishment of social worker posts at different levels in a number of pilot areas;
- Support the re-training of “agents of change” (nurses, teachers, etc.) on social work issues; and,
- Promote social work networks, the exchange of experiences and information.

**Juvenile Justice Sub-Project**

**Sub-project objectives**

- To adjust legal frameworks in accordance with the CRC and other international norms and standards including Juvenile Justice (Beijing rules, Riyadh guidelines, Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty rules);
- To raise awareness of professionals working in Juvenile Justice on CRC provisions and international standards.

**Activities**

- Carry out an assessment and analysis of the current juvenile justice system;
- Carry out comprehensive research on young people in conflict with the law;
- Print and disseminate the juvenile justice basic international instruments (CRC, Beijing, Riyadh, Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty rules,) among Governmental, Non-Governmental Organizations, and youth associations to raise awareness on the necessity of compliance with the CRC and international standards in juvenile justice procedures;
- Promote that the deprivation of liberty only be used as a measure of last resort and advocate for the establishment of non-custodial opportunities among Government counterparts, and law enforcement professionals;
Organize workshops, seminars, and experience exchanges with foreign judicial and law enforcement professionals for introducing and promoting the principle of restorative justice and alternatives to deprivation of liberty;

Develop and implement training programmes for youth inspectors at the police commissariats, judges, social workers, prosecutors and penitentiary custodial staff on child rights, crime prevention, alternative opportunities to custodial measures etc.;

Promote the revision of curricula at the University Law Faculty;

Revise the status of Transit Centers for youth and children in conflict with the law/street children in Chisinau and elsewhere; and,

Train professionals to provide socialization services and organize activities with children.

**Monitoring of Children and Women Rights Sub-project**

**Sub-project Objectives**

- To improve monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for the effective implementation of the CRC and CEDAW at both national and local levels.
- To promote civil society’s participation in CRC monitoring.
- To contribute to the development of a National Plan of Action for the next decade in accordance with the outcome of the Special Session for Children (SSC).

**Activities**

- Provide technical assistance for the development of a National Plan of Action (NPA) under the umbrella of the NCPCR, in accordance with the outcomes of the SSC;
- Provide technical assistance for the development of Regional Plans of Action in pilot areas;
- Support capacity building activities of Local Councils for the implementation and monitoring of CRC and follow-up with indicators related to regional Plans of Action;
- Support the National Center of Statistics in regularly updating specific indicators and in following up the implementation of the NPA;
- Support, in partnership with other agencies and donors, the development of an Education for All (EFA) National Strategy and Plan of Action, establishment of a monitoring unit within the Ministry of Education as a follow up to the EFA resolutions;
- Provide training and information sessions for local media on the CRC and child protection issues, including human trafficking and sexual exploitation issues;
- Carry out regular assessments on emerging issues;
- Promote NGOs and civil society involvement in the monitoring of children's rights, strengthen their mobilization and their participation in regular dialogue with local authorities;
- Develop a communication strategy for disseminating information on the situation of children and women in the country, including child protection issues;
- Promote women associations’ networks for preventing domestic violence and trafficking of women and young girls.

**II. Social Services Development Project**

**Project Objectives**

- To ensure adequate integrated protection measures for neglected, abused, abandoned, and homeless children, including ones in conflict with the law.

**Project Partners**

The project will be implemented mainly through local governments, universities, colleges, local and international NGOs working in child protection, parents associations, youth organizations. The public and governmental agencies include mayors, city and district councils, the local councils for child protection, the department of child protection, the education, health and labour departments.

UNICEF will closely coordinate and collaborate with the National Council for Child Rights Protection, NGOs Alliance, Social Investment Fund of the World Bank, DFID, SIDA, UNDP and TACIS.

**Community Development and Participation Sub-Project**

**Sub-project Objectives**

- To strengthen the capacities and increase the efficiency of local administrative bodies responsible for child protection;
- To promote and raise awareness on the family or family-like as the best environment for the child.

**Activities**

- Support the development of a child protection network among local authorities and NGOs working with families in promoting community-based social services;
- Support local authorities in setting up a database on children with special needs and families at risk in collaboration with NGOs, family associations and local youth councils;
- Support the training of NGOs, family associations and local child protection authorities for promoting the family as the best environment for child development and resource mobilization;
Create a communication strategy for promoting of the family as the best environment for children’s development;

Develop and carry out training activities for decision-makers and local authorities in child protection on planning, monitoring and evaluating of social services for children and families at risk;

Carry out training for ‘agents of change’ (including staff working in institutions) on child care, interactive approaches, the identification of emerging problems such as sexual exploitation and human trafficking for initiating behavioral changes within families and communities;

Support research and assessments related to children and families at risk, community development, and other emerging issues identified during programme activities; and,

Support family empowerment through information/education and counseling activities via PHC services, kindergartens and social workers.

**Social Service Development for children with special needs and their families**

**Sub-Project**

**Sub-project Objectives**

- To prevent and reduce institutionalization by establishing viable alternatives to residential care;
- To promote family-type placements for abandoned children;
- To contribute to creating more effective mechanisms for the delivery of social services;
- To contribute to the social reintegration of children and youth with special needs;
- To promote the integration of children with special needs into mainstream schools.

**Activities**

- Support local authorities in pilot areas for developing, implementing and managing social services for children (including institutionalized children), adolescents and families at risk according to local needs. Pilot projects will include family type residential care, day care centers for children with disabilities or at risk, small groups homes, emergency shelters for street children and victims of trafficking, counseling centers for foster/adoptive families, probation services and so on.

- Support the creation and implementation of an operational system to identify, register and refer children with special needs to appropriate social services;
Identify in partnership with local authorities, strategies for re-integrating children living in boarding schools with their families and in mainstream schools (i.e.: through education grants, special municipal funds and so on);

Identify and implement specific strategies for preventing/interrupting early institutionalization of abandoned children through foster care, family reintegration, small family-group homes in cooperation with local authorities, maternity wards and pediatric hospitals;

Document, disseminate case studies and positive experiences for replicating successful models;

Provide training for the staff involved in providing care services, protection, reintegration and rehabilitation;

Promote with government and non-governmental organizations the integration of children with disabilities into the community, especially through mainstreaming schools;

Provide training on inclusive education for teachers and educators;

Support academic institutions to develop a training curriculum for inclusive education for teachers and didactic materials for professionals working with children with disabilities;

Support local authorities, NGOs, association of families with disabled children to develop community-based services for children with special needs, including rehabilitation services;

Strengthen the network of family associations with disabled children in order to better understand their problems and to advocate for family reintegration of children with minor disabilities;

Mobilize youth organizations to interact with disabled children living in residential care.

Protecting Children from Violence, Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination Sub-Project

Sub-project Objective

To improve protection of children from violence, abuse, exploitation and discrimination;

To raise awareness of child abuse and trafficking and support prevention campaigns/strategies;

To improve the life-skills of high-risk groups of children, including children in residential care;

To provide assistance and reintegration services for children victims of abuse and trafficking;

To strengthen the capacity of psycho-social workers to assist children victims of abuse and trafficking;
CHILD TRAFFICKING: THE CASE OF MOLDOVA

Activities

- Training of local authorities on problems relating to child trafficking, prevention and reintegration to improve the design of local strategies;
- Peer education to promote life-skills throughout school settings;
- Training activities for educators in boarding schools to promote life-skills education as a tool for facilitating the social integration of children;
- Training of psychosocial professionals on the specific needs of abused, neglected and exploited children;
- Support to emergency services for victims of trafficking;
- Support to long-term services which provide psycho-social and other assistance for women and children victims of abuse, neglect and exploitation.
1. JUSTIFICATION

Facts and figures

Moldova remains one of the main countries of origin for trafficking in women and children because of its geographical location and current economic situation, as well as the poor social situation, weak rule of law and rampant corruption. It is also a transit country for trafficking from Ukraine and other countries of the former Soviet Union.

From January 2000 to June 2004 a total of 1,302 victims of trafficking have been officially identified and assisted. However, actual figures are higher as many women and children are simply deported. Extremely few victims are screened, identified and referred to assistance upon their return to Moldova. Exact estimates of the number of children trafficked are therefore not available. The only reliable source of information is from victims who have been fortunate enough to be identified and assisted by international organizations and NGOs. Profiles of Moldovan victims of trafficking for sexual exploitation reveal the following: the majority of victims are very young, 58 per cent are between 18 and 24 years of age when they return to Moldova; 30 per cent were children (i.e. below the age of 18 years) at the time they were trafficked.
70 per cent of victims are mothers; and approximately 80 per cent of them are single mothers. 20 per cent of victims return to Moldova pregnant. The percentage of Moldovan victims with children is significantly higher than other victims from South Eastern Europe. The majority of mothers are not receiving any financial support from the child’s father. Most of the mothers reported that children were left in the care of family members, and some children were left in childcare institutions while they were abroad.

Trafficking of children usually involves adolescent girls who are trafficked for sexual exploitation but younger children, usually below 13 years of age, are also trafficked for forced labour, begging, sale of organs and illegal adoptions. Certain categories of children are particularly vulnerable, including school-drop outs and children from poor, disadvantaged and dysfunctional families. Almost 50 per cent of trafficked victims assisted in 2001 had completed compulsory education, which in Moldova is 9th grade, compared with only 30 per cent in 2002-2003. 10 per cent of victims have grown up in childcare institutions. Since children growing up in childcare institutions represent at least 1 per cent of the total child population in Moldova, they are 10 times more vulnerable to trafficking.

No specialized services for minors existed until recently and minors were identified, returned and assisted without specific regard for their status and particular rights and needs. Since July 2003, UNICEF supports a Child Friendly Wing in the Rehabilitation Centre for Victims of Trafficking providing specialized services for minors. Long-term referral services providing psycho-social, medical and legal support to children victims of trafficking and mothers with children are also being established.
UNICEF’s Response

UNICEF is an observer member of the National Committee on Trafficking in Human Beings and a member of the three working groups established under the Committee on prevention, prosecution and protection. Since August 2002, UNICEF also coordinates an informal working group on child trafficking. This working group has now been formalized by the National Committee through Decision no.3 of 16 October 2003 which establishes a working group to combat “Trafficking in children and illegal taking of children from the country”.

UNICEF continues to provide expertise on children’s issues to the Committee and to advocate for the special needs and rights of children victims of trafficking in accordance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and the Option Protocol to the Convention on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography (2000).

At the regional level, UNICEF has developed Guidelines for Protection of the Rights of Children Victims of Trafficking (2003). The Guidelines have been endorsed by the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe Task Force on Trafficking in Human Beings and set out standards for good practice with respect to protection and assistance of child victims of trafficking from initial identification up until the final integration and recovery of the child. They have been developed on the basis of relevant international and regional human rights instruments and provide a straightforward account of the policies and practices required to implement and protect the rights of child victims of trafficking. They aim to provide guidance to Governments and State actors, international organisations and NGOs, in developing procedures for special protection measures of child victims of trafficking.

UNICEF currently supports the following anti-trafficking projects in Moldova. All projects are coordinated through the working group on child trafficking and implemented in accordance with the UNICEF Guidelines.

Prevention

- UNICEF is supporting the Curricula development for Life Skills Based Education (LSBE). A National Task Force on Youth Health and Development has been established and an Assessment Report on Life skills and health education in school and out of school settings was conducted. The report was used to advocate for curricula reform and inclusion of LSBE as a mandatory subject in schools. The National Programme on LSBE under the Prime Minister’s patronage was launched by the Ministry of Education; The Concept paper on LSBE was elaborated and consulted with professionals. Two workshops were conducted to build national expert’s capacities on curricula development. New curricula will provide children and adolescents with knowledge, information and skills to solve various personal, social and health issues.

- UNICEF supports the project Life Skills Education for Prevention of Human Trafficking and Youth Unemployment. At present
11 general boarding schools are involved in the Project: 26 educators have been trained as master trainers in LSE; 190 adult educators are being trained in LSE and trafficking prevention; more than 250 students are being trained as peer-educators. Adult educators and peer-educators have developed basic knowledge and skills and they organize LSE and trafficking prevention activities with more than 2,100 children in these schools. The project is being implemented through the NGO Centre for Documentation and Information in Children’s Rights (CIDCR) with the support of the Ministry of Education and the State Department of Youth and Sports.

- UNICEF is supporting the Establishment of Youth Friendly Centers (YFC) which help young people to make use of opportunities specifically addressed to their needs, to develop their skills and abilities to take an informed decision and actively participate in the community life. The first three youth Friendly Centers out of seven have been established and open in 2003, another four YFC will be open in 2004-2005.

- UNICEF supports the pilot project Capacity Building of Health Care Workers in Better Parenting, Counselling and Referrals in Chisinau municipality. Training materials have been developed and over 125 health care workers/professionals have been trained on better parenting, family counselling and referral procedures. A Parents Guide on Better Parenting has also been developed, including information on issues related to prevention of abuse and security issues that can prevent children from being trafficked. 6,000 families with small children from 0-3 years of age are benefiting from this project.

- UNICEF has supported a Study on Child Abandonment in Health Care Facilities which will seek, amongst others, to identify the ways in which small children are trafficked. The findings of the study will serve as a basis for developing strategies to prevent trafficking of small children from maternity and paediatric wards, including illegal adoptions.

- UNICEF has implemented an Assessment of Media Campaigns and Outreach Projects aimed at preventing child trafficking. This assessment was part of a regional pilot project implemented in Moldova, Albania and Romania in collaboration with UNICEF HQ and Columbia University. The purpose of this initiative was to assess the relevance and effectiveness of existing projects aimed at preventing child trafficking and identifying elements for effective activities in the future.

**Rehabilitation and Assistance**

- UNICEF supports the Child Friendly Wing of the Rehabilitation Centre for Victims of Trafficking in Chisinau. This wing opened in July 2003 and provides specialized services for children victims of trafficking and mothers with children who are victims of trafficking including medical, psychological, psychiatric, social and legal support.
UNICEF supports the “AMICUL Centre” run by the NGO National Child Abuse Prevention Centre together with the Municipal Child Protection Department in Chisinau. The centre provides free long-term services for children victims of abuse and sexual exploitation through a multi-disciplinary team of experts including doctors, pedagogues, psychologists, psychiatrists, and social workers. The centre also acts as a referral service for children victims of trafficking form the Child Friendly Wing.

UNICEF is supporting the creation of a Maternal Centre situated in the Centre for Temporary Placement of Young Children of the Ministry of Health in Chisinau. The Center is expected to work at its full capacity by spring 2004. In the meantime, it is already providing accommodation as well as medical and psycho-social support services to a limited number of vulnerable mothers and children including mothers who have been victims of trafficking and are at risk of abandoning their children.

UNICEF supported the creation of a new Community Based Centre for Vulnerable Children – Casa Gavroche. The Centre opened in October 2003 in Chisinau and is managed by the Municipal Child Protection Department. It provides services for the social and family reintegration of children in difficulty including children living and/or working in the street, children suffering from abuse, neglect and exploitation, and those facing the risk of abandonment or being trafficked. The Centre has a maximum capacity of 15 children at any time but is also open to the community, welcoming about 50 children from the neighbourhood.

UNICEF has supported a Psycho-social support training for medical doctors, social workers and psychologist working in maternity wards, paediatric wards, maternal centres and rehabilitation centres for victims of trafficking focusing on prevention of abandonment and trafficking.
UNICEF plans to further develop and strengthen ongoing projects during 2004-2006 and to extend its activities to projects which also target younger children who are at risk of being trafficked i.e. children living and/or working in the streets and children who have been victims of trafficking for begging and forced labour.

Main conclusions

Moldova continues to be a significant source country of trafficking. This situation will remain as such until the prevailing conditions of poverty and lack of opportunities improve and legislation is effectively implemented to protect victims and prosecute traffickers. In June 2003 Parliament passed a new Penal Code and Penal Procedure Code containing three articles relating to trafficking: Trafficking in Human Beings, Trafficking in Children, and Illegal removal of children from the country. However, this new legislation does not fully comply with the Palermo Protocol and only focuses on the criminal aspects of trafficking. The process has started to draft a new law on “Trafficking in Human Beings” which will also cover issues related to victim/witness protection and assistance. UNICEF is closely following this process to ensure that the special rights of children are reflected in this new piece of legislation.

Despite some progress, the overall understanding and information about child trafficking remains limited. Available reports usually do not differentiate between children and adults and only limited information is available on children trafficked for the purpose of begging and forced labour. Lack of special procedures and protection for children as well as limited specialized services has resulted in the authorities treating girls under 18 in the same way as adults.

Most families do not have the strength and capacity to adapt to the current level of social and economic change. Consequently, families are withdrawing from many roles leading to a serious underdevelopment of caring and educative skills in the home environments. Likewise, many caregivers have limited knowledge and skills in child care and development. The most at risk groups are children from poor and dysfunctional families. The provision of information, advice and support to families on parenting, especially in relation to children’s health care and development, complemented by more intensive support for parents in greater need, are fundamental.

There is a strong need to further develop and strengthen preventive strategies towards child trafficking by focusing on high-risk categories of children as well as improving programmes and services which provide short and long term reintegration/rehabilitation services including medical, psychosocial and legal support as well as educational and vocational opportunities in close cooperation with government institutions, communities and NGOs. Long-term accommodation for victims of trafficking, in particular children deprived of a family environment, also remains problematic.
2. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The project aims at addressing both root causes that contribute to the vulnerability of women and children by supporting preventive measures as well as rehabilitation/reintegration actions for children based on the principle of the “best interest of the child”. The project will be implemented in close coordination with Government institutions, local and international NGOs, Youth organizations, and international partners such as IOM.

Family education and awareness on all issues related to childcare and development is crucial in preventing child abandonment, institutionalization and trafficking. Staff of the health, education and protection system should be trained to provide parenting education in partnership with local administrations, NGOs and Youth organizations within the primary health care facilities, hospitals, maternal and child health services, kindergartens, social services.

Life Skills Education for children and youth, particularly vulnerable children at high-risk of being trafficked, also need to be supported. Special focus will be placed on the boarding schools educational system which does not encourage children’s personal, interpersonal and social development. Institutionalized children are isolated and have no opportunity to communicate with others, thus they are prevented from integrating into society, do not develop the life and socialization skills for independent community living. All these make them more vulnerable to all kinds of risks including trafficking.

Assistance to trafficked children should be based on the principles of protection and respect for human rights, non-discrimination, access to justice, safety and fair treatment, free will and no harm done. All children under 18 years of age should be entitled to special protection and treatment.

UNICEF will continue to support specialized short and long term rehabilitation and reintegration services and additional training will be provided to professionals in order to ensure appropriate and specialized assistance for children. A referral system for those children in especially difficult circumstances (single mothers, no family/relatives) will be supported. Reintegration strategies will be defined based on vocational, education, and family reconciliation opportunities.

The project is designed for two years and a specific results-based Plan of activities will be developed each year.

3. OBJECTIVES and ACTIVITIES

Prevention

a) Objective

- To improve knowledge and skills of caregivers, parents, teachers,
child care and development issues so as to prevent sexual exploitation and human trafficking;

- To raise awareness of decision-makers and communities on the importance of the “family as the best environment for children” through media coverage.

**Activities**

- Training activities for families/parents (better parenting) to improve their knowledge and skills on child development and care through kindergartens (Parents Resource centres), home visits, PHC centres;
- Training of PHC workers/nurses, social workers and educators as key actors in the fight against child trafficking at both prevention/protection level;
- Training of local authorities on problems related to child trafficking, prevention and reintegration to improve the design of local strategies.

**b) Objective**

- To enable young people to develop basic life skills required to reduce their vulnerability and to diminish the risk of unemployment and trafficking of high-risk categories of children especially children growing up in residential care;
- To raise awareness of the dangers of sexual exploitation among young people, including risks of HIV/AIDS and STIs;
- To integrate Life Skills Education (LSE) in the educational curriculum of schools and residential care institutions (including general boarding schools and auxiliary boarding schools\(^1\));

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\(^1\) Auxiliary boarding schools are residential care institutions for children with minor mental disabilities
To improve the knowledge and skills of teachers and boarding school educators to use interactive methods based on children participation and LSE as a tool for facilitating the social integration of children.

**Activities**

- Peer education activities provided by NGOs and youth groups to promote life-skills through out of school settings. Life-skills education includes: communication skills, conflict resolution, prevention of risky behaviours, health education (sexual education, hygiene, etc.);
- Vocational training activities to be developed through Youth Friendly Centres or the formal education system addressed to the most vulnerable;
- Development of a Life Skills Based Education Curriculum and integration/piloting of the new curriculum in schools and residential care institutions;
- Training activities for adult educators in auxiliary boarding schools and in-service training for educators in general boarding schools.

**c) Objective**

- To improve short and long term protection and assistance for children victims of trafficking;
- To contribute to the establishment of a referral system together with IOM, NGOs and Government institutions;
- To contribute to the strengthening of a social safety net that addresses in particular the problems of returnee children.

**Activities**

- Training of medical and psychosocial professionals on the specific needs of abused, neglected and exploited children;
- Support to emergency services for victims of trafficking including continued support to the Child Friendly Wing of the Rehabilitation Centre for Victims of Trafficking in Chisinau;
- Support to long-term services which provide psycho-social and other assistance for women and children victims of abuse, neglect and exploitation;
- Strengthening of the Youth Friendly Health Clinics network within the most affected areas of the country.

**4. PARTNERS**

National Committee on Trafficking in Human Beings, Ministry of Education, State Department for Youth and Sport, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, Chisinau Municipal Child Protection Department, IOM Moldova, ILO Moldova, La Strada NGO, Child
Abuse Prevention Centre NGO, Centre for Information and Documentation on Children’s Rights NGO, Youth NGOs, local authorities.

5. BUDGET and timetable

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CHILD TRAFFICKING

Stories from the Child Friendly Wing of the Rehabilitation Centre for Victims of Trafficking

Masha

Masha is not an orphan. But her mother never loved her. She simply didn’t want her and she didn’t hide it. Already at birth she tried to sell her to a childless family – but her grandmother stopped her… She thought she’d be able to bring up her granddaughter but hard times hit Moldova. The system changed and society changed as well. The only thing that didn’t change was the grandmother’s income and the little girl grew up poor, cold, hungry and hopeless...

Masha is 15 years old but she looks much younger. The constantly undernourished girl looks small for her age.

When Masha was offered a job in Moscow she thought that her luck had changed. But she ended up in a brothel. Traffickers have no difficulties finding potential victims. They come to remote villages and enter the poorest houses, certain to find there one or more hungry girls with scared eyes. Luring them with promises of a better future they easily find new “live merchandise”.

On one occasion Masha was brought to a hostel room with 23 drunken constructors. Officially non-existent in Moscow, the illegal constructors raped for a whole day the non-existent child. On the second day, sobering up, one of the constructors opened the door...
for her and gave her some money. She behaved completely childishly and bought a bottle of water, some sweets and a story book.

Most people believe that victims of trafficking are only grown-up women. This is true in many cases, but many of them are also children less than 18 years of age. According to the psychologist of the Rehabilitation Centre for Victims of Trafficking, Lilia Gorceag, there are many Moldovan children working as prostitutes on the streets of Moscow. They are taken there by illegal routes, avoiding customs. Many children never return.

The Centre for Rehabilitation of Victims of Trafficking opened three years ago. It is a rented floor of a medical institution in Chisinau. The existence of the Centre is not made public, and women there are not called “clients”: the word makes them tremor. Every reminder of the past provokes deep pain.

“In the beginning we were oriented mainly towards women victims of trafficking – Lilia Gorceag says. – Now the problem is much broader. There are lots of children involved in trafficking. Some of them become victims of traffickers; others were born from trafficked mothers. Their number is so large, that now we have created a special programme for them”. With the support of UNICEF a special Child Friendly Wing has been created in the Rehabilitation Center for Victims of Trafficking, providing specialized services for children and their mothers including medical, psychological, psychiatric, social and legal support.

Ludmila

One of the beneficiaries of the centre is Ludmila. When she was 6 her mother committed suicide by jumping into a well because of the continuous abuses suffered at the hands of a sadistic husband. From then on the father unleashed his anger on the children. They had to sleep with their coats on in case they had to jump out of the window when their father came home drunk. And he always did. When Ludmila started to look more like a young women her life became even more terrible: the father started longing for her. Ludmila is almost 20 now but she still sleeps with her coat.

According to the psychologists working at the Center almost 90 % of trafficked women have suffered from domestic violence – beatings, incest, rape… Having been exposed to high levels of violence they loose the sense of danger. They assume that nothing more horrible than what they have experienced is possible. It is easier to lure them into an even more horrible fate – trafficking.

When Ludmila was offered a job in Turkey she agreed without hesitation. But she returned to Moldova with no money and pregnant with twins. Now her babies are four months old and they live with Ludmila in the Child Friendly Wing of the Rehabilitation Center. They are healthy and there is still hope that they will have a normal life together with their mother.

It’s difficult to say what would have happened if Ludmila had had to solve her problems alone, she needs more than 100 USD a month only for milk substitutes. This is much more than the average salary in
Moldova and Ludmila earns nothing. The post-traumatic stress from which she suffers makes Ludmila emotionally scanty. Trafficked women often transmit their anguish and fears on their children. That is why a special programme has been initiated for pregnant women and young mothers in the Centre. They need to be taught to accept their children, feel responsible for them, love the little creatures and not transfer the aggression that fills their heart on them.

Ludmila refused to feed her babies for a long time. The social workers of the Centre were surprised to see that the babies were crying and that Ludmila would just ignore them. Initially she didn’t even caress her children, or kiss them, or hold them in her arms. How could it be different - she never received love and she has nothing to give. But the long and hard work of the psychologist has been successful. Ludmila is now able to love. She can no longer imagine life without her children. In the beginning she had other plans: to give birth to the children, be with them for half a year and then leave them. She wanted to go to Turkey again to earn money. Hard to believe, but she wanted to try her luck again abroad. “What else could I do? – she says. – go back to my father and end up by killing myself like my mother? Condemn my children to a life with him?”

The fate of women who have been trafficked depends very much on their internal strength and this depends very much on the people that are close to them. If there is a person who can help, without condemning you for things that are awfully painful then there is a chance of overcoming the horrible experience. If the person is alone then his/her internal strength is easily exhausted and the temptation to try one’s luck again re-emerges. Some of them do leave again. They don’t think they may be trafficked again…

Ludmila’s life is different. There are relatives by her side. That’s why she will not go to Turkey again. The Centre has helped her to find money to buy a little house in the suburbs of Chisinau. Ludmila lives there with her children and brother – who also suffered at the hands of
his sadistic father. They will be assisted in the beginning - a social plan has been developed for them.

The myth persists that women that are trafficked know what they will do. This is not true, only one per cent of them accepted the possibility of working as prostitutes. All the rest thought that they would go abroad to work as baby-sitters, nurses, house cleaners… Instead they live for three months up to five years in slave-like conditions, similar to those in concentration camps: closed rooms, window bars, hunger, and humiliations. They live without seeing the sun or the sky, without documents and no rights. Many of them became addicted to alcohol or drugs: the pimps force them to drink and take drugs so that they become more subdued. And after all, they have to continue living; some of them even have to bring up children conceived during their trafficking experience...

Natalia

Natalia returned from the Balkans. She considers her newly born baby as her savior and tries to give him everything she receives from the Centre. “Please, don’t do anything for me, the most important is that he has everything”, - she says. She believes that only thanks to him she was able to escape from the horror she lived in. Her face and head are covered with scars from the beatings and she has a serious form of anemia, and epileptic seizure – caused by the cranial traumas. She cannot remember parts of her life and is tormented by serious nightmares…

The pimp started beating her especially cruelly after she got pregnant – to get rid of the baby. But he did not succeed. When her pregnancy started showing and she stopped bringing in money, they just got rid of her – she was thrown into the street. She is sure that if this hadn’t happened she would not be alive today. She survived thanks to her child and now she is under the guardianship of the Child Friendly Wing of the Rehabilitation Centre – where she and her child get medical, psychological and social assistance. When the baby grows older he’ll be taken to kindergarten and Natalia will be assisted in finding a job.

Most women are trafficked because they have no elementary social skills or professional knowledge, or hope for the future. They accept any adventure. The workers of the Centre try to exclude all these factors when they work on their rehabilitation. Several educational and vocational programmes have been created for these victims so that they have a real opportunity to change their lives.

They get married and have children, acquire a profession, get a job and start their own business. Many victims of trafficking have become seamstresses, hairdressers, waitresses, secretaries… Even those who go abroad again are not always re-trafficked. They are more prepared for life and it is easier for them to get a good job. A former beneficiary of the Centre now works for a serious firm in Moscow. Every now and then, she sends messages by e-mail. The workers of the Centre are happy and proud of her. They are proud of many other hundreds of women who were able to rebuild their lives and reintegrate into society. The scars of their horrible experience will remain in their hearts, but the nightmares have ended - thanks to the people who stood by their side and helped them.
„GIVE ME BREAD”

Forced to Beg at Two Years of Age

Andrei

Andrei is only 5 years old and only now he learns what it is like to be among other children in kindergarten, to play and laugh. Still, he talks very little, and the first words he says to every new comer are in Russian - „daite“ (give me) and „hleb“ (bread) – both meaning food for him. These are the words he learned during a year and a half of begging together with his mother in Moscow. If you gain his trust, he will tell you what marked him the most: “There was a man in Moscow who used to beat me”. He remembers the daily beatings and cold that made him numb when he was out in the street with his mother.

Andrei was only two and a half when together with his mother, Ana, he was trafficked. Without a home or job and with a little child in her arms, Ana was an easy prey for traffickers.

Short and shy, with a boyish haircut, Ana looks more like a child even though she is 25. She, and another 8 brothers and sisters grew up in different institutions, without knowing about each other for years. Their parents would drink a lot and did not take care of them.

When she left the institution at the age of 16 she moved in with her older sister and baby-sitted her children. Then, she fell in love with the first young man who courted her and moved in with him.
Her marriage was not a lucky one either. “Even if I was pregnant, my husband would beat me for no reason. On the fifth month of my pregnancy I went to the maternity hospital in Ungheni and stayed there until the birth of the child”. Despite the poverty and all the difficulties Ana experienced during pregnancy Andrei was born healthy. “I didn’t have a place to go to and I stayed with the child in the hospital in Ungheni for one year, then I was allowed to stay at another hospital - in Cornesti. But I couldn’t stay for long there and I returned to my sister”, says Ana.

She looked desperately for solutions, as she had become a burden for her sister as well. All attempts to find a job failed, because she had a little child to care for. “I didn’t have food or clothes for Andrei”, Ana recalls.

Following her sister’s advice she accepted the offer of a man who promised to get a job for her in the capital, Chisinau, sorting potatoes. This was conditional on taking her child along with her. When she got to Chisinau she found out that she would be taken to Moscow. “Two days before leaving for Moscow we were confined in a house, together with four other women, who also had small children, some of them even in diapers. Only then did we find out that we were going to beg on the streets in Russia and we tried to run away”. The attempt failed and she was almost beaten to death. The trafficker threatened to take Ana’s child away and told her that she would never see him again if she spoiled his plans. The trip to Moscow was difficult. “The traffickers would give us the IDs only at the customs, to present them to the customs officers. We tried to escape twice - once by jumping out of the train, the second time – by telling the customs officers. Each time I was beaten in the train toilet”, she tells.

In Moscow all the women were held together in one apartment. It was late autumn and very cold. In spite of this “the owner” would take the women and children early in the morning into the street where they would beg until late at night, under the supervision of a “watchman”. Ana new very little Russian and had to be taught how to squeeze tears and money out of the passers-by. Whether she was begging in the metro with Andrei in her arms or on a crowded street putting Andrei on the asphalt, the lament was the same: „Uvajaemîe grajdane, pomoghite, pojaluista, na kusocik hleba dleia rebionka”. (Dear citizens! Please, give me for a piece of bread for the child.)

“I was ashamed to beg and people would call me names, that’s why I would bring little money”, she says. All day long they would not eat anything but a piece of bread thrown at them by compassionate passers-by. “In the evening ‘the owners’ would give us only hot boiled water and tell us that we hadn’t made enough money for food”. Each of the four women had to collect 4 thousand rubbles daily (almost 150 USD). The children had to be by them all the time to make the passers-by feel pity for them. They
would be beaten every time the plan was not fulfilled. The same would happen when they got into the hands of the police. “Several times I went to the police office myself to ask them for help to return home. But ‘the owner’ would pay money to the police and take me again into the street, after having beaten me and the child”. For ‘bad behaviour’ she was taken to beg in Samara, another Russian town.

Half a year later, with the help of a passer-by, Ana ran away and found shelter in a monastery. The abbess was from Moldova. She was horrified to see the bruises on the child’s body. She helped Ana get the necessary documents and return home to Moldova.

Upon her return, Ana received assistance through the project of social services provided to children and families at risk in Ungheni, supported by UNICEF and „Every Child - Moldova“. There she found people ready to listen and help. “It was my salvation, since, in despair, I had no place to go to or person to ask help from”, she says.

As she was deeply traumatised by the experience she had had she was placed in hospital for five months. During her rehabilitation Andrei was placed with a foster family. Andrei speaks daily with pleasure about that period. “We used to play all day long at Ms. Maia. It was nice there. Grandma Pasha had many animals and I loved them”, says the boy. Not a day passes by without him retelling his mother at least one episode about his alternative family. Within the same project the Ungheni Raion Council offered Ana in July last year a room in a hostel and facilitated her employment.

At that same time Andrei started attending kindergarten for free. Only now, at five years of age, Andrei learns what it is like to be among other children in kindergarten, to play and laugh.

The pilot project in Ungheni, is supported by UNICEF and implemented in partnership with the NGO Every Child and local authorities and supports the development of a integrated child-centred family-based social service, explains Kirsten Di Martino, UNICEF Child Protection Officer. The project focuses on prevention of abandonment, abuse, trafficking and placement of children in residential care. Between September 2002-November 2003, 91 families and 282 children have benefited from family support services including psycho-social, financial and other assistance. Andrei is one of the lucky children who has benefited from these new services.
IT IS POSSIBLE TO LIVE WITHOUT VIOLENCE

For Many People this is Something New

Aliona

Aliona is only 11 years old, but she has already experienced so much – more than any adult could handle. Aliona lived with her parents who drank and beat her and her elder brother. Half a year ago, during a drunken brawl their mother killed their father. But nobody rushed to put her in jail: she had three children to take care of. She is still free. After her father’s death, life became so unbearable that they both ran away to their aunt in Chisinau. They were accepted, but their aunt also beat them, although not as often and not as hard as their mother used to. The aunt had three children of her own and neither she nor her husband had a job. It was impossible to support two more children.

The workers from the National Center for Child Abuse Prevention discovered Aliona through her 14-year-old brother – the boy used to come to warm up and play in the Amicul Center – a community Center for the rehabilitation of abused children. It was very difficult to work with Andrei: he came to Amicul with pleasure, but disappeared as soon as someone started talking about his future.

Aliona is different – she gladly comes to the Center. For the first time she felt that someone was not indifferent towards her. This is new for her. Aliona spends a lot of time with Diana Postu, the psychologist of the Center and she now expects more than just punches from life. A week ago Aliona started to smile again. At first she smiled very seldom, then more and more often. She is not that introvert anymore, but she still prefers to sit quietly and listen to other people speaking. She only entrusts her feelings to...
paper and paint. She mostly paints nature. Initially, it used to be cheerless and depressing – gray, brown. And now the winter is gradually retreating from the girl’s soul and her trees become greener every day. Maybe, the sun will begin to shine above them as time passes? She paints and plays, she likes dolls and books. “But only with illustrations”, specifies Aliona, she cannot read very well. She learned to read not long ago and she is already 11 years old. She has a lot of catching up to do.

The relationship with her aunt is getting better. Aliona and her brother have a long way to go, they will have to face their mother’s trial and they have to be seriously prepared for that. Then a long social rehabilitation process will follow. But the most important thing is that there will be a real friend helping them throughout this - Amicul.

The National Center for Child Abuse Prevention has been operating since 1997. The Amicul program started in 2003. At the AMICUL Center children receive help from an inter-disciplinary team of social workers, psychologists and legal advisers. Chisinau authorities cover a part of the expenses of the center - utilities and rent, while other expenses are covered by UNICEF.

Different children seek help from the Center – from homeless “gavroches” to children from rich families - even material sufficiency is not an insurance against violence. Society views violence in the family as something acceptable and extremely private. If it happens in a family that is not rich it is perceived as normal. If violence occurs in a well-off family, then no one will have the courage to report it, even those, who should be the first to start crying out.

In one of the schools from the capital – with a good reputation - a music teacher had worked for many years. During individual lessons with girls from primary school this old man used to close the door and imitate sexual intercourse. It is difficult to say how many victims there were. The case was discovered only after one of the seminars conducted by volunteers at the Center. To their horror they found out that no less than five girls had been harassed during the last five years.

The reaction of parents was remarkable. Only one family decided to remove their daughter from the school and initiate an investigation. The others decided to just drop it. Some of them considered the situation to be too delicate and others decided that if there was no direct violence, there was no problem. But there is a problem. The girl was pushed towards psychological exhaustion over the years she spent terrified waiting for the music class. She’s now in depression, she’s tortured by nightmares and phobias - she complains of head and stomachaches.

The Coordinator of the Center for Child Abuse Prevention, Elena Popa, works with the volunteers. “There are many volunteers working with us and there are new ones coming all the time”, she says. “I think, not only the fact that they talk to others about the dangers of abuse and its consequences is important – around 80 thousand children
participated in our seminars and 20 thousand adults – but also the fact that they themselves will not become aggressors and will not tolerate abuse towards themselves.”

Unfortunately, within the last two years state organizations take care of the protection of child’s rights less and less. The regional Departments for Child Protection have been abolished and the State Service for Social Protection is overloaded. The existence of the Center for Child Abuse Prevention is therefore very important. It is not only active in revealing abuse, but also in fighting it.

The violence problem usually is tightly related to other problems: poverty, alcohol, trafficking…

16-year-old Olea lived with her mother and her brother in a two-room apartment. Her mother drank, her brother was a drug user and beat her. From time to time she used to run away to her friends. One day, she told them that she intended to go to Turkey: the husband of an acquaintance, a citizen of that country, promised to help her with the documents and find her a job. It is easy to suppose what was to happen to the naïve girl. In this case with the help from the Center for Child Abuse Prevention it was possible to avoid a tragedy and change Olea’s life. The girl stayed in Moldova, graduated from a trade school, and got a job. She does not have to wonder around other people’s places anymore. With the help of the police, the aggressive brother no longer abuses her: he did not quit taking drugs, but he is afraid to touch his sister. The girl’s file is closed, but she will continue to receive support together with many other Moldovan children, who are in trouble. They will be helped, if necessary, by people who are not indifferent and who devoted their lives to children.
Memories Still Torment Eugenia
Day and Night

“I don’t want to remember, although this is something you never forget. It is unbelievable, but during six months I’ve been through hell”. These are the words of a girl from a village of Moldova, who was deceived and sold to a trafficking network from Moscow and obligated to prostitute. At 17, she is one of the girls helped by the Child Friendly Wing of the Rehabilitation Center for Victims of Trafficking.

Eugenia grew up without a father since she was little. When she was 14 she also lost her mother who remarried and left with her second husband for another village. Her three children, Eugenia being the youngest, remained alone in their grandparents’ home. “After a while my brother and sister went to work in Chisinau. They sent me food sometimes, but they could not support me. This is why, after finishing school I tried to find a job in Chisinau myself”, says Eugenia. She had worked as a waitress in a bar and rented a room for 2 months. Last summer she met Valera, an acquaintance from her village, who offered her a better paid job. He introduced her to another “well-doer”, a man in his forties, called Grigore. He promised that he will get her a job as a waitress in a bar in Moscow. “You will be able to return home at any moment, if there is something you don’t like. The salary and the tips are very good”, said Grigore and she had no doubts. The next day she was already on a train to Moscow, with another two girls. One of them was from her village. At the railway station in Moscow the girls were met by a Moldovan who was about 55 years old, with a very nice face, but a black soul. When they arrived to an apartment full of girls in the center of Moscow and their documents were taken away, the girls understood that they were in the hands of traffickers. “I paid a lot of money for you and you will do what I tell you”, said Mr. Ion. In the two-room apartment lived another 15 girls, most of them 13 -17 year-old Moldovans, “watched by two bodyguards” the girl remembers.

„When we fainted they threw us in the pool, and then splashed us with vodka and continued to mock us...”.

The next evening Eugenia felt what it was like to be the slave of a pimp, when she was dressed and put on a bus and taken to garages to “work” together with other girls. „It was like a market, where clients could chose the girls they liked. “The master threatened us that if we screamed or resisted, he would beat us to death”, she says. Eugenia was sexually abused by the man who “bought her” for one night and paid a lot of money. During four months, night by night, the girls were taken out on the streets or
under bridges, no matter what their physical state was. “Sometimes we did not sleep for four days, other times I was starving”, says the girl about the nightmare she has been through. Eugenia was one of the tallest and had long hair. That is why, they used her as bate for rich clients and she spent most of the time along the road. “In winter they forced me to drink alcohol in order not to freeze. But this was not the worst thing that happened to me. The clients often put drugs in our drinks for us to be cheerful and for a week afterwards my bones-ached terribly”, says Eugenia.

Even in this state the girls were forced to work every night. They were sent to the hospital only when they could no longer get out of bed. It was then when they found out about the infections they had. Eugenia says she was forced to go with every client, no matter what state he was in. Only the money mattered. “One evening two clients took us to a sauna full of drunken men. They were over 20 and we were only two. They raped us and physically abused us many times. When we fainted, they threw us in the pool, then splashed us with vodka and continued to mock us…. In the morning the owner of the sauna got us out of there almost dead”, says the girl, hardly holding back her tears.

Escape

I ask her why she did not try to escape earlier. “I did not speak Russian, I had no documents and no money. I did not know were to go for help. Then I was scared because of the pimps’ threats and of the bodyguards who did not lose sight of us for a minute”
she explains, continuing her story. „After four months Mr. Ion left us in the care of his nephew. Then he left us in the hands of his sister-in-law, Olguta, who had about 40 girls” Eugenia remembers. She worked for her another three months without seeing any money, until the day when together with a colleague they managed to escape. “We took advantage of the fact that the guards were asleep when we returned from the clients in the morning. We took the money we gathered from the tips the clients gave us and ran away from there”, the girl says. They knew that the pimps could wait for them in an ambush at the railway station and they took the train to Odessa, and from there to Chisinau.

When she got home, Eugenia changed her appearance because she was afraid of the pimps. But this change did not bring her the peace she needed. She had never told anyone about the nightmare she had been through and which affected her enormously, until now. She was ashamed and scared. She regained her confidence only at the Child Friendly Wing of the Rehabilitation Center for Victims of Trafficking, where, she says, she found people who were ready to understand her and help her. Her only wish now is to learn a profession and start her life again to be able to wipe out of her memory the seven months spent in Moscow. These memories still torment her day and night.
THE EMBRACE OF THE STREET

Casa Gavroche, a Temporary Placement Center for Homeless Children

Artyom

Artyom “registered” on the street after his step-father had beaten him for bothering his little brother. Despite his young age, Artyom is able to live on the street, steal and has a police record. Even before the incident with his little brother Artyom used to run away from home, but nobody would look for him. With the birth of the second child – Artyom lost even the minimum of attention, kindness and love he had had before.

Now Artyom lives in the Centre Casa Gavroche, a Temporary Placement Center for homeless children. The boy is bright, attends school and has good results. He values his new friends very much – he is ready to give up his previous habit for the sake of good relations with them. Once he stole 100 lei from one of the workers of the Centre and disappeared. But after some time he returned in tears: “I will never do it again and I’ll return the money. Just take me back!” And they accepted him, of course. One month has passed and no more thefts.

Still, Artyom cannot live in Casa Gavroche for always: it is a temporary placement centre. It is also called ‘alternative centre’ and it is totally different from the common situation in Moldova: children like Artyom usually end up in boarding schools – closed institutions, like the one in Solonet - something between a prison and a school. The purpose of Casa Gavroche is different – to reintegrate the child into the biological or an alternative family.

“It will probably be impossible for us to reintegrate Artyom with his mother, - says Rodica Coretchi, the manager of the Centre – but we have found another solution. The boy could live with his grandmother who loves him. But she will take him on one condition: Artyom should not steal any more. He could also live with his aunt’s family… We’ll have to work seriously on this, but the situation is not hopeless: the boy is open and ready to change”.

Serioja

Serioja came to Casa Gavroche at the same time as Artyom, and their stories are very similar. Serioja also has a mother and stepfather. The behaviour of the boy started to change after the death of his grandmother – she was the only person who had enough patience and love for Serioja. The mother is not a drinker, she is quite well-off, but she’s never had enough time for her son. “You are not a mother to me!” – Serioja would shout in a fit of temper. “And you are not a son to me!” – the woman would answer.
Serioja went to school for the first time at nine – his mother didn’t bother placing him in a school earlier. What would a tall boy feel like next to giggling ‘kiddies’ of seven? Once he didn’t come to school. Then he didn’t come home. Then he stole something and was placed in the police temporary placement centre...

In Casa Gavroche he can’t complain of lack of attention. The workers of the centre work not only with him, but also with his parents. For the first time in 12 years Maria started realizing that she has some responsibility for her son’s behaviour. She is ready to change and cooperate. The unrelated father doesn’t love the stepson very much but he has accepted his presence in his life. Still… years on the street have their effect. The boy is pathologically drawn to run away, it’s easier for him to steal than to ask, he tells lies easily. Not long ago Serioja said merrily that the director of a prestigious capital cinema theatre had promised to take him to Saint Petersburg. The thought of trafficking and paedophile network was the first to come to mind. The workers of the Centre discovered that Serioja was being lured to Saint Petersburg by an older boy who was living on the street and had money. According to Serioja, his friend knows perfectly well how to get to the Northern city without money or documents. Under such circumstances the risk of trafficking is very high.

The police are preparing Serioja’s documents for the boarding school in Solonet. Still the workers of Casa Gavroche hope that the boy will not be sent there. He has returned to his parents and makes an effort in attending school. Serioja doesn’t believe the stories of the possible dangers of living in the street; he thinks he knows better than the people who try to help him. But he is also attracted by the life he leads since he came to Casa Gavroche. There’s a constant struggle in Serioja’s heart between the attraction to the street and the tendency to normal life. Sometimes he runs away swearing from the Centre or his mother, sometimes he comes back in tears and brings Rodica Coretchi touching drawings. “Forgive me! Do you think it’s easy to be in second grade when you are 12 years old? But I love you all the same!” Every word in this letter is coloured with soft-tip pens, as if the boy has not decided yet what he wants to do with these words – emphasize or hide?

The threatening ghost of Solonet as well as the threatening ghost of gangster Petersburg still haunts Serioja. But now he has an alternative – he knows he can choose another life.
A BLIND STEP INTO THE OUTSIDE WORLD

Life Skills Education for Children in Institutions

“When you put together a car, you need to install all the parts to make it work. Same is life – we need to know more things to be able to go ahead”

(Andrei, 14 years old, Boarding School, Cășănești)

Vladimir is an orphan, just like all the other 160 children from the boarding school in Napadova, Floresti Raion. Many of them are “social orphans” and have parents. Vladimir has lived in the institution for nine years and only stepped out of the boarding school gate four times. In a year’s time, when he graduates from ninth grade, he will have to leave the school and step blindly into the outside world. He would like to go to work abroad, so that he could buy a house, clothes and food.

He was brought to the institution when he was about 7 years old. His mother had left for Russia with another child and left the youngest boy with his father who was alcoholic and unemployed. The boy worked with his father for the people in the village and slept anywhere. Since he was brought to the boarding school he has no news from his family. The letters he sent were never answered.
The day I visited the institution the lessons were over and Vladimir, together with other children, was working in the garden. According to the rules posted on a wall of the dormitory, children are not allowed to sit on their beds except when they go to bed in the evening. Vladimir is short, feeble and has an angry look. He wears a thin jacket and a pair of ragged boots, but he tells me snivelling he is not cold. He is used to the fact that in the big bedroom where 8 boys sleep together it is always “chilly”. To get warmer, they sleep two in a bed and use the two blankets to tuck themselves in. The most valuable things he keeps in the bedroom are “the new” trousers he bought from the “humanitarian aid” for 20 lei, the tooth brush, the tooth paste, a laundry soap and the towel. This is his entire fortune.

He bought these things after all autumn long he gathered walnuts and sold them to people in the village for 5 lei per 100 nuts. He gets the rest of his clothes every season from the boarding school storage room. They are usually rather shabby. He exchanges things with one of his friends, actually his only confidant and “support”.

As a large information anti-trafficking campaign has started in Chisinau these days, I ask Vladimir what he knows about this phenomenon. He has heard this word but he doesn’t know the exact meaning of it. “When a girl or a woman is raped. When they are taken as merchandise to other countries, sold several times to different men, without their consent”, his colleagues explain. “They go to other countries because they don’t have enough money and because of the family conditions. They think they will make much money if they go there but some of them are sold for organs. They have relations with more men and don’t ever come back. Some have their eyes taken out, others - their kidneys “, Vladimir says. He thinks nothing of this kind could happen to him. Like most of the girls and boys from senior grades he says he would go to work abroad but only with a friend or a “reliable person”. “First of all I would find out who the person is and if he is not deceiving me. I would not go with strangers. And in this case nothing bad could happen to me “, he says.

Most of the children from the boarding school in Napadova cannot imagine the future, except for going to the vocational school in Marculesti - as their older colleagues did for many years - or going to work abroad. “I don’t know what I want to be as I don’t think so much about this, but I think I would like to go to work in Russia so that I could buy a house, clothes and food”, the boy says.

Octavian Granevschi, the director of the institution, told us that it is his duty to ensure the children continue their studies after the ninth grade at one of the vocational schools in the region. After this he loses all contacts with them. He only hears from three of the 75 graduates he’s had until now, all the rest are scattered in
the big world. No one cares about them anymore. “Under this poverty, no one wants to adopt children anymore. The last adoption was two years ago. But it has always been a rare phenomenon. We are far from Chisinau and the roads are in a bad condition. Few people come here”, he says.

There are about 14,000 children placed in residential institutions all over Moldova. Just like Vladimir, they grow up isolated, lack social integration skills and are not prepared for an independent life. It is much more difficult for them to find a job or to continue their education. Because after graduation from the boarding school they don’t have anybody to rely on or any service to support them, they are more exposed to unemployment and trafficking.

As a response to this situation, UNICEF and the Center for Information and Documentation on Child Rights have initiated a project to provide Life Skills Education to prevent unemployment and trafficking of children brought up in institutions. 11 general boarding schools across Moldova are involved in the project: 26 educators have been trained as master trainers in LSE; 190 adult educators are being trained in LSE and trafficking prevention; and more than 250 students are being trained as peer-educators. Adult educators and peer-educators have developed basic knowledge and skills and they organize LSE and trafficking prevention activities with more than 2,100 children in these schools. The project is support by the Ministry of Education and the State Department of Youth and Sports.
“Activities are interactive and designed to include children fully and to create some practical skills,” says Viroica Cretu, the project coordinator. “During the first stage we train peer educators, who work with their mates. They are taught skills related to communication, interpersonal relations, conflict resolution, job seeking, time and money management, decision making, self-respect and healthy lifestyles.”

Young people involved in the project are excited about their activities and the skills they have learned so far:

- “I was alone, but now I have friends, I am wiser and more conscious.”
  (Sergiu, boarding school, Vâșcăuți)

- “I used to go out on the territory of the school and not talk to children who had deficiencies. Now we communicate, because they are children like us.”
  (Mariana, boarding school, Vâșcăuți)

- “My faith was like a ship without sails and now the ship has sails and I struggle for something – for life!”
  (Ion, 13 years old, boarding school, Vâșcăuți)

- „This year I realised what the future holds out for me.”
  (Maria, 15 years old, boarding school, Ungheni)