Human rights and democracy

Keeping families together

Mother & Child Centre in Ukraine saves children from abandonment by providing assistance to women in need

Most of the women we assist were either orphaned at a young age or are in a real predicament. Of course, the most difficult cases are with those who have no memories of their own mothers and don’t know what it is to be part of a family. Our goal is to stir up their feelings, to explain that they are not alone anymore.

Alla Sheremet, director of the Khmelnitsk Oblast Mother and Child Centre

Context 100,000 children without parental care

In 2010, more than 100,000 children were living without parental care in Ukraine. The number of babies abandoned by their mothers is relatively high (800-900/year). Recently, this number has slightly declined thanks to better assistance offered at birth houses and mother&child centres. The main reasons why parents abandon their children are: lack of family support, homelessness, unemployment, and psychological distress. The EU is playing an important role to support Ukraine to build a friendly social policy focused on the most vulnerable part of society, such as single mothers or children deprived of parental care.

Objectives

- To introduce new approaches and to improve quality of social services
- To prevent children from abandonment and support vulnerable mothers
- To encourage women to restore family connections and to promote re-socialisation

Impact

- The Khmelnitsk Centre helped 40 women and 41 children over a 3-year period. None of these mothers abandoned their children
- More than 520 children placed in state care institutions were provided with assistance
- Childcare system reviewed and improved to meet the needs of vulnerable children

For more information: http://vsirivni.org

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Right to be a responsible mother

24 years old Hanna from Khmelnytskyi oblast moved to Kyiv after an unsuccessful experience in Moscow as a migrant worker. While pregnant, she worked at a Kyiv market. The money she earned was only enough to buy food, which meant she was often forced to sleep in night shelters. Immediately after the delivery Hanna was asked to abandon her baby – they told her, “You have nowhere to go, do you?” Having heard horror stories on TV about children being sold abroad, Hanna turned to the social services where she was offered help.

Hanna thus found the Khmenitsky Mother & Child Centre. The Centre helped her start over with her former guardians – her foster-mother and grandmother. Now her biggest dream is to get her own place and have a family of her own. Recently she met a nice boy, with whom she hopes to build a lasting relationship. Perhaps this is the next step to realise her dream, which began with the EU-funded centre.

Young mothers can stay at the Centre for 18 months while they try to re-establish connections with their relatives and find a home to live in. During this one and a half years, the centre helps them build a strong and affectionate connection with their child and become responsible mothers. For many women, the Mother & Child Centre provides them with their last chance to safeguard their right to motherhood.