

Returning children to their families and an inclusive environment

Moldova – Lumos: De-institutionalisation and developing inclusive education

SUMMARY OF PROJECT

Together with the Moldovan Government, Lumos has promoted an integrated policy and programme of deinstitutionalisation and inclusive education for children with disabilities. This allows them to leave residential care and to return to their families and communities while receiving education in a mainstream school.

“Five years in an institution seemed like an eternity. Now I live with my parents and sister, and I want to be here forever!”

—Dumitrița, 14, child from Moldova

FACTS & FIGURES

- The number of children in institutions has been reduced from more than 11,500 to less than 4,000 during the period of 2007–2013.
- Due to the development of inclusive education, the number of children with disabilities in inclusive schools reached to nearly 4,500 in 2013.
- More than 10,000 professionals – teachers, social workers, and others – have been trained on school inclusion of deinstitutionalised children, provision of qualified support to children with special educational needs, adapting the curriculum to children’s potential, etc.

PROBLEMS TARGETED

In 2007 approximately half of all children in institutions were those with disabilities living in residential special schools, separated from their families because the only education for such children was provided in segregated schools. When the government initially started a deinstitutionalisation program, it mainly focused on children without disabilities.

SOLUTION & METHODOLOGY

Lumos, in cooperation with local authorities, put in place community-based social services making it possible for children with disabilities in institutions to go home to their families or be placed in foster care. Simultaneously, it developed inclusive schools to make it possible for these children to be educated in mainstream schools, alongside their peers. The program also assisted the Ministry of Finance and Ministry of Education to put in place a law that ensures that government funds that had been going to institutions to support disabled children are transferred with the children to community social services and inclusive schools (for additional support teachers, adaptations to buildings, etc.). To strengthen the capacity of teachers and stakeholders, training and awareness-raising was held for 15,000 professionals. Lumos is also monitoring and evaluating the impact of the transition.

OUTLOOK & TRANSFERABILITY

The project is completely scalable within Moldova because it has been proven in a number of regions and because the legislation frees up funding from institutions to finance community-based services. The project has demonstrated that it is considerably cheaper per child to support them in a family context and to have them receive an inclusive education in their own community than it is to keep them in an institution. It has also been shown that the increase in developmental and educational outcomes of children living at home with their families is significant.

Photo

Author J. K. Rowling, founder and President of Lumos, meets 14-year-old Dumitrița (with glasses), who lived for five years in an institution in Moldova. With Lumos support, Dumitrita was reunited with her family and enrolled in a mainstream school, and is now an active promoter of inclusive education for all children.

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