

MOLDOVA



Children have the right to be protected of violence, exploitation and neglect. In Moldova, migration, poverty and overuse of institutional care make this especially challenging.

Poverty and lack of community-based services has led to the placement of thousands of children in residential care; many of them children with disabilities. Despite progress Moldova still has one of the highest rates of children living in so-called orphanages in Europe.

Migration, family breakdown and overuse of residential care increase the number of children with insufficient adult support, contributing to other risks, including trafficking. And almost one in five Moldovan children is engaged in child labour within the country.

Corporal punishment and violence remain worryingly common in Moldova. By the age of six or seven, more than half of all children have experienced beating at home or at school. Sexual abuse and exploitation, sex tourism has recently emerged as an alarming phenomenon.

The rights of children in contact with the law as offenders, victims, witnesses or parties are not represented appropriately, and their re-integration into a family environment or their communities is not supported. Positive reforms supported by UNICEF have reduced the number of children in orphanages and in prisons by respectively 40 and 60% over five years.



NEXT STEPS

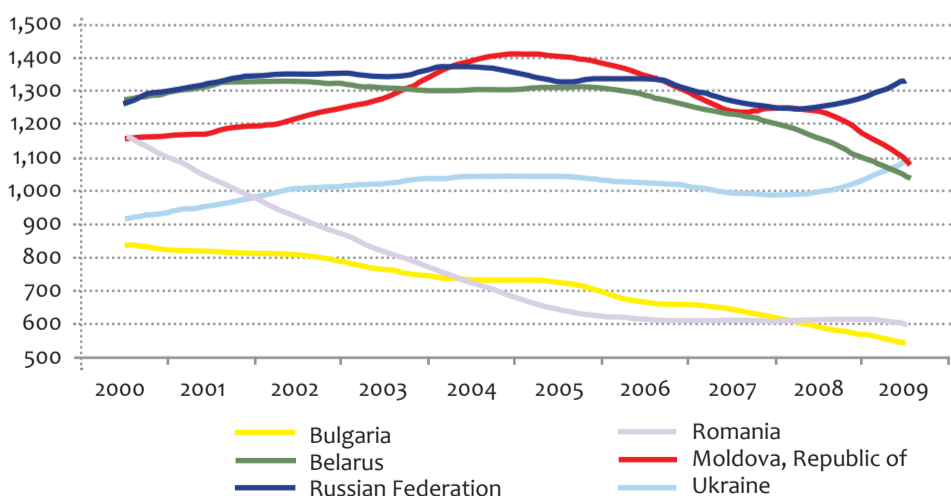
An efficient referral system to identify and assist the most vulnerable children and families will be developed, documented and scaled-up at national level. Efforts to address child labour and violence will also be included;

Community-based family support services will be developed to empower families and children to overcome the difficulties they face. Family-based services will be further developed for children who cannot live in their families;

Government reforms of the residential childcare system will continue with examples of best practice being documented and implemented across the country;

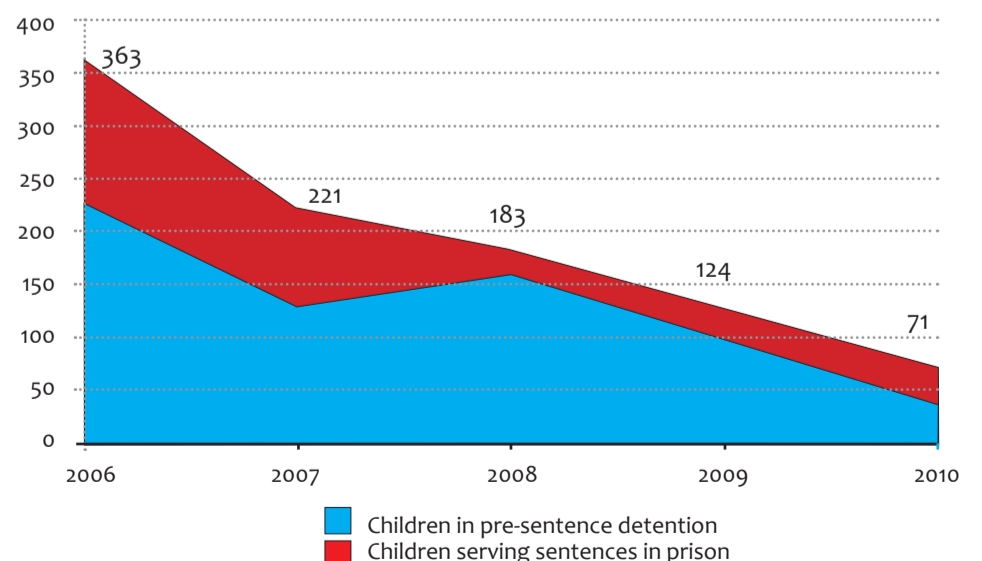
More effort will be put into improving justice for children so that all children who come into contact with the law are treated in accordance with child-friendly procedures and get appropriate support from police, judges and prosecutors.

Rate of children in residential care (per 100,000 population aged 0-17)



Data source: TransMONEE 2011 database

Number of children in pre- and post- sentence detention



Data source: National Bureau of Statistics

WHAT UNICEF DOES

Making child protection a reality for vulnerable and at risk children

UNICEF is helping improve early identification and support to children at risk and their families, and to ensure an adequate response to children who experience violence or abuse. This involves:

- Strengthening community-based family services and social work;
- Improving social assistance so that poor families with children get the support they need;
- Creating family support services to respond to the multifaceted challenges families face;
- Ensuring that services are responsive to key challenges, including migration, trafficking risk, disability, single parents, older caregivers, family violence etc.;
- Making sure that teachers, medical staff, police and other community members recognize the signs of violence or abuse and can take action.

Reducing reliance on institutional care

UNICEF supports the reform of the residential care system, by improving national policies as well as local services. This includes:

- Reuniting children with their families, through good social work and supportive services, and involving children themselves in the process;
- Improving local level decision-making so that fewer children needlessly enter the care system;
- Developing family based alternatives (e.g. foster care) for children who cannot live with their own families;
- Developing maternal centres to support mothers at risk of abandoning their babies.

A BRAND NEW LIFE FOR VANIA



Until a few months ago, Vania was locked into a special institution for children with disabilities.

In Moldoveanca village's middle school, the yard looks like any other schoolyard at recess time – children running, laughing, chatting, and playing. Vania (a nickname for Ivan) is one of them – a tall, handsome, athletic boy playing football along with other students. Until a few months ago, Vania was locked into a special institution for children with disabilities, away from his family and community. He now lives with his aunt and uncle and goes to a regular school.

Vania is one of more than 300 children who left specialized residential institutions for children with disabilities in 2010 and were reintegrated in their biological families, or placed in foster or kinship care. This is all part of the UNICEF support to Moldova to close or transform the country's 38 residential institutions.

Improving responses to children in contact with the law

UNICEF supports the Government to reform the justice system so that fewer children end up in detention, and those in contact with the law get the help they need to return to a normal life. Work includes:

- Training judges, prosecutors and the police to respond better to children, including young offenders;
- Supporting partners to develop better laws, policies and procedures in line with international and European justice standards;
- Developing community and prison-based programmes to support at risk children and young offenders and to prevent (re)offending and assist with their re-integration.

KEY RESULTS

- The number of children living in residential institutions dropped by forty percent in five years to reach 6,900 in 2011;
- Models for the closure of residential institutions are being used by the Government to progressively close most of them. Child and family participation is central to these models;
- The number of foster families and family-type homes is constantly increasing, supporting the deinstitutionalization of children and preventing their placement in residential care;
- The new Law on Domestic Violence and related implementation standards have considerably strengthened the legal framework in this area;
- Over 400,000 school children and 40,000 teachers have been sensitized to violence and how to prevent and react to it;
- The maximum prison sentencing for a child has reduced from 15 years to 10 years;
- The number of children in detention reduced by more than sixty percent between 2007 and 2010.

Carolina Virtosu, the social worker who is following Vania's case and has supported his integration into his new family and school, explains the process: "In Spring 2010, three specialized institutions for children with disabilities were identified by the Government for closure or transformation. Each child was assessed by professional social workers and psychologists".

The 12 year-old boy was abandoned by his mother when he was three year old and his father was unknown. For years, Vania was shuffled from one institution to another, torn away from friends and caregivers every time. In the end, he was settled into an institution for children with disabilities – Vania has no disability. His relatives, his aunt and uncle, barely knew of his whereabouts and worried for him but did not know to whom to turn.

Social worker Carolina Virtosu managed to find Vania's aunt and uncle, Ala and Andrei Todoriuc. Together they discussed the possibility of his coming to live with them. "I was opened to the idea right away", said Ala Todoriuc. "I grew up in a large family and I am used to having many people around. He is not a stranger to us."

Carolina Virtosu concludes: "The goal of our Government, with support from UNICEF and other partners, is to decrease the amount of children placed in residential institutions. This is a pretty ambitious goal, especially since we must do case-by-case, child-by-child, and there are several thousand children to be assessed and integrated into a family".

Vania and the story of hundreds of other children prove that these efforts are worth it.