

# Families For Children

INTEGRATING SERVICES FOR HIV-AFFECTED CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

December 2007

## REACHING OUT TO HIV-AFFECTED CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

USAID supported Families for Children Program (FCP) implemented by Holt International has been working in Ukraine since 2004 to ensure that vulnerable families and children receive support and services which will help them to stay together and allow children enjoy childhood, be loved, respected and cherished.

One of the vulnerable groups targeted by FCP is HIV-affected families and children. How to preserve a family for a child when the parents are HIV-infected, dying, immersed in or devastated by

drugs; when they are isolated and stigmatized; or in some cases simply can not be found? In response to these and many other issues, the Families for Children Program has been conducting trainings for service providers, caregivers, parents and children; offering technical assistance and sharing international best practices; providing funding support through its comprehensive grant program.

Through 25 grant projects supported by Families for Children Program in the area of HIV/AIDS, as of October 1,

2007, 7,254 people (including decision makers, service providers, parents and children) participated in various training activities; 76 media appearances (publications, TV/radio programs) addressed the issue of HIV affected families and children, 31 products (booklets, posters, films) were developed, 81 community events were conducted, 10 community groups were established. 462 children and 589 families received psychosocial support 313 cases of child abandonment/removal from parental custody were prevented.

## FINDING HOMES FOR HIV POSITIVE CHILDREN

8 year old Nastya and 6 year old Lena were abandoned in maternity hospital right after birth. They both lived in a hospital for almost a year and then were placed in Makeyevka Baby Home where they have lived since then. Nastya and Lena have HIV infection and receive ARV therapy. Both girls have been placed in a foster family. They now have a loving mother and a sister.

Anna first heard about children needing homes in August 2006 from a friend of hers who was working on project implemented by Cherkassy PLWHA network. The project was supported by the Families for Children Program and its goal was to find families for children from Makeyevka Baby Home.

In spring 2006, the Families for Children Program initiated a pilot project aimed at moving HIV positive children from the regional Baby Home in Makeyevka, Donetsk oblast, into family-type environment by either re-integrating children into their birth and extended families or placing them into foster and adoptive families. FCP engaged Ministry officials, regional and local child welfare workers as well as HIV-service organizations in the development and implementation of a targeted foster/adoptive parent recruitment campaign to find families for 23 children.

In November Anna applied to take a mandatory training course for foster parents and completed it successfully in December 2006. She began collecting documents to register a foster family. Anna went to Makeyevka Baby Home in May 2007 to meet the children and was introduced to little Lena. In September, Anna returned to meet the second child and to ask Lena if she wanted to go with her home. Lena was delighted. Anna also asked Lena if she had a friend. She introduced



Lena and Nastya now have a mother



Representatives of NGOs meet with kids in Makeyevka Baby Home

Anna to her friend Nastya. Now, Anna has three beautiful girls (including her own 5-year-old) who love each other and bring a lot of joy to their mother. To date, 13 children from Makeyevka Baby Home have found families.

The effort continues. ❖

## HELPING PROSPECTIVE PARENTS TO LEARN ABOUT CARE FOR CHILDREN WITH HIV INFECTION

Finding families who are willing to take in care children with special needs, including HIV positive children, is not a simple task but such individuals and families exist, we just do not always know where to look for them. Once they are found, we need to make sure that prospective parents understand issues

specific to HIV infection. To help with this, FCP developed a training module on Care and Support for HIV-Infected Children. The training module was approved by the decree #2668 of the Ministry of Family, Youth and Sports on July 25, 2007 and was incorporated in the state mandatory training program for foster parents.

The Families for Children program and UNICEF joined efforts to conduct Training of Trainers for regional teams from 20 oblasts of Ukraine. Each multidisciplinary team of trainers includes a pediatrician from the AIDS center, a social worker from the Center for Social Services and a representative from the HIV-service NGO. ❖

## MOMS' SUMMER CAMP

Thinking of a summer camp the first image that comes to mind is of a summer getaway, which offers kids and teens a chance to become more responsible and independent, to share their experience communicating with peers. But have you ever heard about moms' summer camp? Would they benefit from such a getaway if they are given a chance?

In the summer of 2007, six HIV-infected mothers with children between 18 to 24-months-old participated in a summer camp organized by Peremoha (Victory), a charitable organization based in Brovary, Kyiv Oblast. Women who didn't know each other before by the third day were already babysitting each other's

children. Soon all toys were brought together to a common "play room" set up in one of the houses, while the play area was set up outside. When it was time to go home, there were a lot of tears and hugs because neither moms nor their children wanted to say 'Good bye.' This summer camp was a wonderful opportunity for the mothers not only to share challenges of their lives but also to share experience about coping with difficulties and raising their children. They now continue to see each other at the support group meetings and also come visit each other.

Peremoha, a Brovary-based charitable organization, works with at risk families, including HIV-affected. Established in 2003

to provide social support services to vulnerable people, in 2005 Peremoha expanded its services to people living with HIV/AIDS. In March 2005, the NGO actively participated in a series of community family care workshops organized by FCP in the Brovary rayon. "Peremoha" applied for a grant and has successfully won an award. The grant was given to support the establishment of the Center of Comprehensive Services for HIV affected Families and Children from the city of Brovary and Brovarkoy rayon, Kyiv oblast. In addition to the services offered at the Center and home visits, "Peremoha" staff tried to offer a variety of activities to the families. Today the Center is providing services to 20 families with children. ❖

## HELPING YOUNG MOTHERS

Liniya Zhyttya (Life Line), the only HIV-servicing organization in Gorlovka, Donetsk oblast, works to provide support and services to various groups affected by HIV/AIDS, including 37 mothers, mostly single, with small children. This October, FCP awarded Liniya Zhyttya a grant to start a day care room for children born to HIV positive mothers.

The need for such a service became quite pressing, as more and more mothers dropped by the center asking the NGO's staff to look after the toddlers for a couple of hours so they could go to see a doctor, meet potential employers, talk to a social worker, or go to a support group. Regular childcare, unfortunately, was not easily affordable to them. Liniya Zhyttya was ready to provide a room for the kids but did not have enough money for refurbishment, furniture and toys. With the FCP grant, the room was organized and equipped, and a caregiver was recruited to look after the children. The project started in

October 2007 and since then 15 children between 6 months – 4 years of age have already visited the room, some with their mothers. The children are happy to meet

other kids and play with them, to discover new toys and play games, while moms can attend Young Mothers Club, a new support group. ❖



Day care room in Liniya Zhyttya

**HoltInternational**  
FAMILIES FOR CHILDREN PROGRAM IN UKRAINE

**Families For Children Program in Ukraine**  
Kyiv 01030, 25/40 I. Franka str., office 31  
tel. (044) 494-0349, fax (044) 234-5470  
fcp@holtintl.org.ua, www.familiesforchildren.org.ua



**USAID**  
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE