



## Economic and Social Council

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### Commission for Social Development

#### Fifty-first session

6-15 February 2013

**Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and  
the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly:**

**priority theme: promoting empowerment of people  
in achieving poverty eradication, social integration and  
full employment and decent work for all**

### **Statement submitted by Kids First Fund, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council**

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.



## Statement

The Kids First Fund, a non-governmental organization based in the United States of America, helps abused and abandoned children. We protect children from abuse, empower young adults to seek a positive future, and build awareness of child abuse. The Fund relies on an all-volunteer administration to raise funds throughout the world. Project funding focuses on countries where resources are limited, such as Latvia and the Republic of Moldova.

The Kids First Fund and its Moldova-based partner, the Child Rights Information Centre Moldova, began its second year of cooperation in 2011. The Centre carried out the Child Abuse Awareness and Prevention Project, with 100 per cent of grant support provided by the Fund. The Project was implemented in six rural districts in Moldova: Orhei, Leova and Rezina (during the spring) and Edinet, Drochia and Rascani.

The Project takes an innovative three-tier approach by reaching three crucial groups involved in the child abuse issue: teachers, parents and children. The process begins with a three-day seminar to equip educators and other school professionals with knowledge and tools to address sexual and physical abuse and bullying. The following is a sampling of the topics included in the agenda:

- Exploring personal attitudes and values related to the phenomenon of violence
- What are the types and consequences of abuse and neglect?
- Risk and protection factors related to abuse and neglect
- Moldovan and international legislation to protect children from violence
- How to identify cases of abuse and refer to authorities
- Prevention of abuse and neglect in the family, school and community
- How schools can respond to the problem of child abuse and neglect.

A core group of educators from each district, such as primary and high school teachers, school inspectors, deputy directors of education and school psychologists, are trained to lead sessions with students, parents and other teachers. These educators are encouraged to train others in order to expand the roster of trainers.

It is obvious that the Project is touching many lives. In 2011, it reached 3,700 persons in six rural districts; results from the fall period indicate that a far larger audience was reached. This reflects more effective reporting of activity; the change to an in-house trainer; higher levels of teacher commitment; a more practical approach to training; and better scheduling, with parent and student events held during holiday periods. The sessions rely on a number of methods of teaching the curriculum, such as PowerPoint presentations, small groups, individual reflections, art therapy and SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) analysis. Participants receive materials developed by Centre staff, the United Nations Children's Fund and Moldova's Ministry of Education.

The Project focuses on engaging students of all ages. Kids First Fund board members Jay Sorensen and Roger Grigulis participated in a student session at Peresecina High School. The students became actively engaged in a conversation about violence and abuse. The discussion leader created an environment in which

the students developed strategies for overcoming conflict and recognized the need to stop violence so it is not passed on to the next generation.

For the majority of the teachers, the sessions provided their first opportunity to learn about child abuse. The teachers reported that there are no strategies or action plans to prevent violence in schools; all attention is focused on dealing with abuse after it has been discovered. Awareness of the legal protections provided to children was virtually non-existent prior to the sessions. Educators were surprised to learn about the long-term consequences of child abuse. They also admitted that teachers are a source of violence against children; unfortunately, stories of teachers physically abusing students are common.

Most important, the participants recognized that the school environment is crucial in the prevention of violence. A collaborative effort involving other professionals, parents and children is key. The Project is continuing, with seminars planned for six more regions in 2012. Training has already occurred in the Cantemir, Stefan Voda and Criuleni regions of Moldova.

This Project shows that important results can be achieved by engaging students to help one another become better aware of child abuse issues. These empowered elementary, middle and high school students receive age-appropriate skills to better ensure their personal safety, to protect other children and, hopefully, to someday demonstrate these behaviours as parents.

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