



Il Melograno: the network of welcome

Year 4– Number 11 – February 2009

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Il Melograno

Dearest,

With the arrival of the New Year a more operational new structure has been proposed to the members of the network. First of all, finally a common space (The Pomegranade) has been created inside the website www.childout.org, a site to broaden the abandonment themes, about children and youth living outside the family, as well as about adoption and the importance of the civil society (as users and resources) to act to promote welcome as the answer to abandonment.

We are trying, also, to broaden the regional knowledge about the different groups and we want to thank the local associations that have been contacted and that demonstrate themselves to be available as regional secretariats, point of reference also for the other groups: the coordination Il Melograno Bolivia for Latin America that speaks in Spanish, the GAASP of San Paolo in Brasil for the Brazilian groups, Osraty in Morocco for the Kafala theme, and the Liga in Ukraine for the East-Europe/Russia area.

The bad news is in regard to the project that has been presented at the EU of whom many groups were part: unfortunately, although we have reached a very good score, it has not been approved. Nevertheless, to grown up together and to promote a real culture of welcome (the aim of the network), in 2009 the key word will be co-planning: the elaboration and presentation to private and public funders of local or regional projects among the network members. More information will reach you from the regional secretariats and from Amici dei Bambini local offices.

Best regards from the international secretariat of the Melograno.

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This newsletter wants to be an instrument for sharing news and initiatives among network participants. If you want to write an article or a to give a testimony or to publicize an event of your group, please feel free to write in your own language or in English at the international secretariat: filippo.agostino@amicideibambini.it.



Moldova

A special Christmas for adopted children

In occasion of the Christmas holidays the Adoptive Parents' Association – APA have been able to organise a series of very pleasant and fun events for both children that have been adopted and their parents.

During the holidays a psychologist and some volunteers of the Association “Prietenii Copiilor”, together with APA, have left for the city of Stefan Voda that is situated in the south of the Republic of Moldova.

On one side, the parents have been able to find a lot of answers for their questions, speaking together with the psychologist, on the other the children have been involved in fun games, they participated to the recreational and animation activities organised by the volunteers and in the end they presented a small Christmas concert. As recognition for their performance they received presents and sweets.

The day after there has been another event, this time in the north, in the region of Pepeni: practically one year ago in this district it was funded the first branch of the association APA. Since the first moment it was understood that this branch would have successfully started many contacts with the adoptive couples of the region. In Pepeni, the other members of the association have been nicely surprised by the concert organised there by the local couples' adopted children, a concert during which the children, for more than one hour, dressed in traditional clothes, have literally delighted the present audience.

More than this, there has been the possibility to discuss with the adoptive parents about the territory. The testimonies of each of them and their issues have been listened to, and they have received counselling and hypothetical solutions to the everyday problems with adopted children. Admirable is the story of Rodica Glib, responsible for the branch in Pepeni, that beyond having adopted two children, for one year have been taking care of an orphan young boy of 16 years old. And at the moment they are preparing the documents to adopt this third son. Their story is completely special. By chance the couple had read an article in a newspaper about the story of this young boy, and from there everything started. Now, after one year from his entry in the family, the boy is perfectly integrated in the family context and he feels part of it, son and older brother.

Mongolia

The dream is achievable: a fairytale for everyone

Once upon a time there were some children that were living in the district of the Botanic Garden. One evening in winter the children were outside making snow men. Among them there was a child unhappy than the others whom name was Baska.



Baska did not have a friend and his thoughts were always very sad. His teacher asked him why he was always so sad, but he did not want to tell her the reason.

When Baska left the Centre and went to the ice rink, he saw that all the children were playing with their parents; he was there by himself looking at them with his eyes full of tears.

He could not look at them anymore so he went away. As he was going back to the Centre under the snow he saw a strong light, so he put a hand on his eyes and fell in the snow. When he stand up it was already dark, he was cold and scared. Suddenly, he heard an unknown voice. When he looked in the direction of the voice he saw an old man that asked him:

- Baby, what are you doing there in the dark by yourself?

Baska answered:

- As I was going back home it came out a strong light, then I closed my eyes and I fell asleep. I can not find my way back and I am very scared.

The old man said:

- This night is going to be very cold so it is better if you come with me and sleep at my house, then tomorrow you would be able to go back at your centre.

Then the old man asked:

- Baby, which is your dream?

Baska said that his biggest dream was to live with his parents.

They entered the house, it was small but warm. The old man fed him and prepared the bed. Baska fell asleep and the old man went to the kitchen and boiled a special thing. The day after he gave it to him.



Baska asked him what that thing was. He explained him that it was a magic potion and that after he would have drunk it his dreams would have became truth and also the dreams of the other children in the Centre. The old man said to him that it was better for him to go back to the Centre because the other children and happiness were waiting for him.

He run to the Centre, all the children were waiting for him but he could not trust his eyes and his eyes were full of tears. Then someone called him and he turned and he saw that his parents were there. But he could not believe it and he did not move.



His dream had become reality and also the parents of the other children were there. From that moment all the children lived forever with their parents.

Tseren- Youth group 'A Good Idea', Ulan Bator, Mongolia

Morocco

A Caravane that cures...sans frontieres

A “Caravane medicale” (a medical service) in order to speak about the importance of the personal hygiene to children and adolescents of the Centre “Sidi Bernoussi”. On Sunday February 8th it has been developed an activity open to all the abandoned children, aged between 4 and 20 years old, from the centre of Casablanca.

The “Caravane medicale” has been realised thanks to the intense collaboration and coordination work between the Centre direction and above all the young volunteers of the Moroccan association Caravane sans Frontières.

The “Caravane Medicale” has been opened by a first moment to raise the awareness about hygiene: the voluntary doctors and nurses have spoken with children and young people, which benefit from the project, about the absolute importance of personal hygiene as determining factor to enjoy a good health. It has also been an occasion of fun for children, apart from the education, thanks to the recreational activities in which they have been involved. Every doctor, behind a dividing wall settled up for the occasion, gave consultation to 130 children and young people that were waiting in line with curiosity and with their sanitary book in hand.

Some of them, among the youngest, were scared by the idea that the doctor with the stethoscope would be a bad person. And in the end it was nice to see them going out with a relaxed and smiling face. After every consultation each of them has received a bag with toothbrush, toothpaste, comb, soap, shampoo and towel.

It has been a really nice moment and useful for all of the guests of the Sidi Bernoussi. It is very important also because it is not going to be limited to this experience, but it would be proposed in the next months in other places in Morocco. A good example of young people working for unlucky peers.

Brazil

Brazil: a proposed law to compensate children that have been abandoned

It has been presented from the deputy Carlos Bezerra a proposed law that would recognise the moral abandonment for children and that would foreseen a compensation for the moral damn experienced. In those hours the House of Commons in Brazil is discussing this law.



This proposal is an important cultural change inside the Brazilian society, because it wants to recognise that abandonment is a real violation of children's rights, as also sustained in the Chart of Cervia promoted in Italy by Amici dei Bambini (see issue 9 of the newsletter).

"The trauma caused by parents abandonment influences deeply the children behaviour" said Bezerra during the presentation of the proposed law to the House. *"Waiting for a parent that never shows up, feeling refused and being angry because of the indifference of other people, harm deeply the child personality"*. – he concluded.

It is not the first time in Brazil that attention is dedicated on recognising a damn for abandoned children. A sentence of the Rio Grande do Sul Court of Justice in July 2008 condemned the State to compensate for moral damns a 15 years old boy, that had been abandoned and then had been free for adoption for years, with 10.000 R\$ – that are 4.000 Euro. In this case they wanted to compensate the existential damn experienced by the boy that, even if free for adoption, has never been welcome.

Brazil is one of the South American countries where children abandonment is more diffused: poverty, family and social break up, determinates in adults resignation and despair that then impact on children. A recent survey of the Istituto Brasiliano di Ricerca Economica Applicata (IPEA) speaks about 40 thousands children living in public institutes: the number is certainly underestimated, because it does not count all the institutes that do not receive money from the state and are part of the so-called "submerged". The IPEA research highlights also that the permanency of children in the institutes is not temporary: the 50% of children living in the institutes stays there for a period that goes from 7 months to 5 years, and for the 32% of children the period is from 2 to 5 years.

Very often the parents are obliged to abandon their children because of economical difficulties, sometime coming together with family conflicts and break up problems, and episodes of violence and mistreatment.

Let's present il Melograno:

We continue the presentation of the groups that are part of the International network Il Melograno; in this issue we present the association of foster mothers of Colombia:

<i>NAME OF THE ASSOCIATION</i>	Asociación de madres sustitutas Subactivas
<i>PRESIDENT</i>	Maria Aurora Gonzalez Aguilar
<i>Nº ASSOCIATES/PARTICIPANTS</i>	24



MISSION	To give protection to children and adolescents in our country that find themselves in a situation of abandonment, abuse, mistreatment or that suffers from chronic illnesses.
PRINCIPAL ACTIVITIES	Activities are: 1) to provide the medical care that our children need; 2) to make possible their positive integration in the educational system of the country; 3) to organise and realise recreational and sports' activities; 4) to help them to find back their self esteem; 5) to guarantee the necessary elements that would help the children to improve their situation; 6) to love them and transmit them a sense of safety.
TERRITORIAL DIFFUSION	Locality of Suba, district of Bogotá- Colombia
BRIEF STORY OF THE ASSOCIATION	The association was born on October 7 th , 2007 and has been registered at the Chamber of Commerce of Bogotá on April 10 th , 2008. It was born from the experience of the components, foster mothers for many years. It has been created to answer to the need to have new spaces legally recognised, to give strength and voice to the “work” that we have done for more than 20 years.
COUNTRY CONTEXT	In our country the phenomena of abandoned and abused our children is unfortunately very common. In the last years the numbers are rising, despite the measures realised by the State. Many are the causes on top of this serious problem: the forced displacement of people from the areas of conflict (<i>los desplazados</i>), the situation of social disadvantage of the families, the loss of equal opportunity for everyone and, in the major part of cases, the fact of not having food to provide to our children.
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