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FOREWORD - SOCIAL BRIDGE BUILDING

“No person is an island”, we say. However, many of those who benefited from this project have been living as if they were. Isolated; outside; on their own. Not by choice, but by misfortune. Never is that more frightening to see than when the person in question is a child or young person.

My strongest impression from this project – and it’s main achievement, I believe – is the many bridges it has built. Between the ‘social islanders’ and the mainland of community. Between isolated social workers and the necessary wider professional network. Between innovative NGO initiatives and sustainable public authorities - from local communities all the way up to ministries. Between rights holders and duty bearers. And we must insist that all children and their families have a fundamental right to social protection:

“If the situation is to improve, eradicating child poverty and social exclusion must be considered a fundamental human right…. Adequate housing and family income, quality healthcare and family support are all necessary to ensure our children’s security and give them hope for a better future.” László Andor on Child Poverty in Europe 2010. Mr Andor is the EU Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion

Bridges build relations. Relations prevent exclusion. May these bridges be strong enough to link individuals and equip them with what is necessary to cope.

Jørgen Thomsen
Project Manager
DanChurchAid, Copenhagen

FOREWORD: STRONGER TIES

An imaginary bridge has been spanning the distance between Denmark and Hungary for a long time; the two countries have been interconnected several times in the course of history. Denmark received refugees of the 1956 Revolution with great care and their integration was followed with attention. Joint project of the Danish church-based aid organisation and Hungarian Interchurch Aid is based on this cooperation. When we received refugees from GDR and Romania and launched our humanitarian aid programs in Transylvania and Romania, the Danish partner supported our work. The same support and assistance was given when HIA was founded. We became part of one big family. This project, which is supported by the Danish Velux Foundations, is a further strengthening link in the imaginary bridge.

Our joint and former experiences are being raised to a higher level hereby; we provide a new type of assistance to needy families. Contrary to former practice, we do not want to accommodate families in community shelters but to provide them with the opportunity to live in halfway apartments in order that they could return to their independent, everyday life as soon as possible. It is not – it cannot be – our goal to open further and further institutions. We want to intervene not on the surface but to eliminate roots of the problem.

Our initiative aroused the interest of the competent ministry as well. Based on the positive feedbacks received, our project has its place in the social care system. We believe that intervention must be performed where it is needed most. It is important that needy individuals have jobs, own incomes and they should not depend on state allowances. Stable accommodation facility is good for their self-esteem and gives them strength to everyday work.

We are determined to continue the joint bridge-building by the help of a broadening circle of Danish partner agencies. This collaboration gives strength and encouragement to our work.

László Lehel
President – Director
Hungarian Interchurch Aid
PROJECT DESCRIPTION
(REINTEGRATION STEP BY STEP)

Since 1990 Hungary has gone through substantial economic, social and institutional changes. This process has accelerated economic development but also resulted in growing inequalities and vulnerability. The system of public services has been unable to cope with the increasing marginalisation of the most vulnerable; as a result, the process that pushed more and more people into deep poverty and hopeless situation without future prospects could not be stopped, either.

Means and institutional system of local governments defined by law are unable to provide proper solutions and find accommodation for destitute and vulnerable families. At the time of project planning (2005-2007), specific rehabilitation and reintegration programs were missing thus chances of leaving the system of social provision were very small.

Hungarian Interchurch Aid (HIA) has provided crisis and longer-term reintegration assistance to vulnerable children and families since 2000, where HIA opened temporary shelters for children and their families at risk in the Eastern towns of Miskolc, Szolnok and Orosháza. These settlements are situated in Hungary’s poorest Eastern region where problems have been further deepened by recession economy.

Experiences from the work in the shelters have revealed a need for a widened involvement in order to strengthen the chances for the target group of social inclusion. In 2007, Hungarian Interchurch Aid (HIA) with its long term partner, DanChurchAid (DCA) received the opportunity from Velux Foundations, to build on its own previous experience a complex, social inclusion program in Miskolc, Szolnok and Orosháza. The project’s intervention strategy reflects a complex and integrated approach that is directed to the sustainable development of the target group, to solving their short-term needs and enabling their long-term social reintegration as to the following:

1. Responding promptly to urgent needs of children, youth and their parents in crisis situations including social support for stimulating reintegration into society; and
2. Supporting the reintegration of children, youth and their parents into school, vocational training and the labour market, and enabling them to access public services.

The project started on 1 November 2007 with three main activities:
- drop-in centres,
- temporary shelters, and
- halfway homes.

In addition to the already operating temporary shelter services HIA established 3 drop-in centres - with the funding of Velux Foundations - where families can receive crisis intervention services, and purchased 2+2+2 flats or houses outside the social centres operating as halfway homes. Families can live independently in these flats/houses but still are supported by the project staff in order to achieve their full social inclusion.

At each project location a social worker, a psychologist and a lawyer work with the project’s target group with the support of the social expert, the HIA’s and DCA’s project coordinators. Additionally, special experts, professionals and trainers can be involved in programs for specific activities (i.e. speech therapist for children’s development, employment trainer for employment support). HIA is responsible for the overall project implementation with the support of DCA who is responsible for the overall monitoring of the program. The DCA’s coordinator monitors the project annually (six monthly in the first year) and the HIA’s coordinator every six months. From the beginning, the DCA’s coordinator supervised the establishment of project management system, and gives continued support to HIA’s coordinator during implementation. HIA and DCA are jointly responsible for narrative and financial reporting to the donor every six months. A final evaluation will close the program in October 2011.

Activities and results

The program provides the following services:

**Educational support and crisis intervention:** the main goals are the following:
- to reveal problems quickly and elaborate action plans for the children and their families,
- assistance in kind,
- legal, psychological and social counselling,
- job search support and assistance in searching for job opportunities.

Results of project activities from the beginning of the program until 30 June 2010:
- 4,873 individuals were involved in program services,
- which included 12,923 cases.
- 711 persons were provided with temporary accommodation
- 1,482 individuals received material assistance
- 80% of the problems of individuals involved in crisis intervention have been settled successfully.

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Individual and group meetings are conducted with other stakeholders, where problems are discussed relating to the education, problem solving, and motivational support of children. Together with children and parents a number of activities on motivation and improvement of the education of their children at primary schools and further vocational/technical schools are planned and implemented.

The crisis intervention addresses the entire family by providing them prompt and effective assistance. The service is directly dealing with factors leading to crisis by the help of a social worker, a psychologist and lawyer and it offers alternatives for problem solution.

In temporary homes for families of Hungarian Interchurch Aid crisis intervention is part of the social work provided for clients living in the homes. In Crisis Centres (Szolnok and Miskolc) victims of family violence receive 30 days of complex care. HIA could widen its crisis intervention services with the material assistance of the “You are not alone” project and made it available to outside clients through partner organisations by the help of drop-in centres.

As a result of the above services 80% of the problems of individuals involved in crisis intervention were successfully settled by 30 June 2010.

Reintegration services and development of children - these services are organised after school-time for children involved in the program. Development activities focus on the result of the assessment done when a child enters the project. As part of the project, an innovative assessment test was elaborated that shows which partial skills of the given child should be developed. The HIA’s staff members collected and created several materials, prepared toys and tools to develop certain skills of the children. By today, the HIA’s centres have a development tool collection that can serve as a model for the work of temporary homes in the future. The individual and group activities develop the children’s logical, emotional, mental, and cognitive skills, as well as motion coordination. Not only the basic project staff members (social workers and psychologists) work with the children, but developmental teachers, speech therapists and other special experts are also involved in this work. As a result of the above activities, school reports and development test results show that 81% of the children involved in the programme have improved their school results and partial skills.

**Employment and job search support:** These activities are very important to the parents who are involved in the project, as experiences show that 95% of adults in crisis situation are unemployed or live on casual or “black” work. The target group is assisted by the project staff in improving their employment opportunities by receiving help in how to access and use different types of care services (e.g. arranging phone calls, preparing applications, filling in forms, paying travel costs). Additionally, not only HIA addresses the business sector and uses its comprehensive connections with employers, but also the beneficiaries can benefit from the cooperation already existing with the local employment bureaus. Employment assistance is cut to the needs of the given person in a way that clients could avoid potential failures as much as possible. The project supports the target group to overcome simple barriers such as covering travel costs to the working place, procuring working-clothes, solving financial difficulties until the first salary (foodstuffs, fuel), if needed. External job trainings are organised such as self-knowledge, communication skills and job finding courses - which transfer knowledge and techniques to unemployed parents. They learn how to write CVs, what is important during the interviews, how a working contract looks like, what should be included in it. They also learn about their rights and responsibilities, active and passive instruments to ease their search for jobs and also what services are available to find employment. During the first two years of the program, not only the above described activities were important, but also to keep the unemployed parents in an active unemployed status by the project staff as the economic and global crisis caused even more difficult situation for the target group to find new jobs. According to project experiences, it is very important to keep people active in their lives while unemployed in order they could start working if a new opportunity appeared. By first half of 2010 a total of 135 individuals used the employment support and job finding service; 96 persons of them could find jobs so approx. 71% of the parents fighting with job-seeking problems found employment as a result of the program.
Within the framework of the program:
- 6 halfway apartments/houses have been established
- 51 individuals have been accommodated in halfway apartments/houses

Reintegration by the help of halfway houses/apartments: the main goal of the service is to create an environment that supports the full integration of children into their families and supports the families to regain their social status. Within the framework of the service HIA provides 1-5 years of accommodation for families in the halfway houses/apartments. Accommodation in halfway houses is a possibility to families that are ready to move on from the temporary shelter and meet basic requirements, such as parents having permanent registered job, pre-savings, realistic future prospects and long-term plans. Applications are judged by the project team. Successful applicants pay the overhead costs of the flats and a minimal amount of rent, and still can benefit from and participate in project services. The objective is to ensure large-scale independence for the families. One of the 6 homes is based in a small village while the other five are in towns that can result in different experiences of best practices of social inclusion. To date 51 persons have been accommodated in the 6 halfway homes within the program.

Establishing and organising Social Forums: HIA is striving to cooperate during program implementation with the following stakeholders:
- local level (municipality, churches, local social providers, schools, NGOs)
- national level (ministries, NGOs)
- international level (international NGOs and alliances, umbrella organisations, EU institutions and programs, UN member agencies)

Of course this ambition is being realised with different intensity, but it actually works - international level (international NGOs and alliances, umbrella organisations, UN member agencies)

Dialogue meetings with local authorities, politicians and representatives from public institutions: As complementary activities to the social forum and the seminar, HIA initiates regular dialogue meetings with local authorities in the three cities, politicians from local and national level and relevant representatives from state institutions and ministries. The intention is to promote various types of approaches for successful reintegration of vulnerable groups. By including politicians and state representatives in the discussion of alternative approaches, the need for increased resource allocations and a change of attitudes within the state system towards the most marginalised is met and this is expected to have a positive impact on sustained social changes for the target group.

The dialogue meetings serve as a forum where NGOs, the local municipality and the state system can jointly develop new solutions to address the economic and social problems of the target group. The staff members of HIA regularly took part in sessions of ministerial commissions and workgroups, conferences, micro-regional and municipality meetings where they not only had the chance to establish contacts with other organisations but could also influence the legal and professional practices.

Summary

Based on its own initiative and piloting professional work, Hungarian Interchurch Aid with the support of DanChurchAid as its long term partner, could establish this four-year, social inclusion program in Hungary supporting the most marginalised group, families in crisis. An important part of program activities is to start dialogues with affected organisations and decision makers in order to include the established activities, experiences and results in state legislation and the overall social provision system. As a result of several years of advocacy work, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour not only started to include crisis centre and halfway house services in their own system and to support other organisations to implement similar services, but also mandated HIA to set up and oper-
ate the National Family Temporary Shelter Methodology Centre in Miskolc for five years. The primary goal of the Methodology Centre is to co-ordinate the work of the 110 family temporary shelters already existing in Hungary, to share accumulated experiences and results, create common protocol and best practices, and to communicate and advocate recommendations about legal act amendments related to the family temporary shelter activities. HIA is striving to establish and maintain strong partnership with the new government as well.

**During the timeframe of the project the relevance of project activities became more visible:**

- due to the global economic crisis more and more families became vulnerable in Hungary,
- the number of unemployed increased significantly.

As a pilot initiative the method applied in the project can be disseminated in other parts of Europe, as well, to handle similar problems deriving as a result of the global crisis. At the same time the co-operational structure applied in the project is innovative, as well: the professional expertise of DanChurchAid that is transferred within the project has proved to be an added value to the activities.

The main value of the form of assistance applied by the Velux Foundations is that the planned services, program elements can be modified and transformed during implementation and also new elements can be added if necessary. Today this approach is highly innovative within the Hungarian support system.

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**DISCUSSION OF PROJECT RESULTS**

I. Discussion of project results in the light of numbers:

HIA established its services within the project in November 2007 to assist families struggling with multiple problems and awkward life prospects. In beneficiary selection the priority aspect is to reach and address families where there are difficulties with the children's school performance and school attendance - irregular school attendance, truancy and other problems that throw difficulties in the way of proper level and quality of the children's school progress.

**Participation in services until now:**

- The original goal of the program is to involve 4,000 individuals in different services during the four-year timeframe. This number had almost been reached by the end of the second program year and it was exceeded at the end of 2009.

- The six months intervals’ breakdown of the above data shows a kind of cyclic character. During the first six months of the years (from January to June) less individuals took part in services than in the second half of the years (from July to December). It is mainly explained by the fact that assistance and services were mainly organised to promote school attendance and overcome difficulties connected

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**Mr. Balázs Rácsok**

Social Expert of the project “You’re not alone”. Head of the National Methodology Temporary Family Shelter, Miskolc

*Since when have you been working for HIA?*

I have been working in HIA’s Miskolc center since 1994 and I have been participating in the “You’re not alone” program since 2007.

*What qualification do you have and what is your professional background?*

I am a qualified social worker and supervisor. My professional experience is based on participation in implementation of several EU applications and projects.

*What is the aspect of the project “You’re not alone” that distinguishes it from other programs in your opinion?*

It was my first international project. My experience is that domestic programs are advancing slowly, with frequent stops. Cooperation with the Danish partner was rather a conversation in which we could find solution for the emerging problems together. The program is flexible and plastic. In Hungary it is just the opposite — everything is too bureaucratized in most cases for example, new needs cannot be built in the program.

*Could you tell us about a decisive case from your program experiences?*

I had a family with two high-school children who attended a school 20 kilometers away. They were eminent students but did not have money at that time. They could buy only one monthly ticket, one day it was used by one child, next day by the other. We were lost in the labyrinth of Hungarian bureaucracy to find a solution for their problem while this family would have only needed HUF 10 thousand per month during the winter period for the extra heating costs and so that the rights of children had not suffered at all; they should not have stayed away from school.
to it. Thanks to it, more people joined the program in the period from August to October when families’ budgets are burdened with extra expenses due to the high costs of starting the school year. Purchasing school-books, covering travel costs, procuring proper clothes significantly increases the families’ budgets and causes insolvency in other areas (overhead costs, classroom bank, medicines, monthly tickets, instalments) as well.

**Using services, principles of assistance:**

Based on the data of Diagram 1, another interesting process can be observed. During the first two time intervals each person used the given services twice (1.8 times to be exact). It means that a family or an individual used crisis intervention services twice, information counselling once and received in kind assistance four times. During the next intervals this rate has changed. In the third six months this indicator exceeded three and reached 3.5 during the last half-year. What can be concluded from these numbers?

One of HIA’s main professional principles is that it is not thinking in terms of long-lasting forms of assistance. HIA does not intend to provide long-term assistance and make the family dependant on aid. The services rather aim to settle a given situation or problem quickly, in a complex way or to assist in situations that can be restored through a short-term support. A relief process, for example, might consist of one social and information counselling, two sessions of psychological counselling and in kind assistance provided 7 times.

Staff members needed almost one year to find and shape optimal frames (occasion, duration, frequency) of efficient assistance in crisis (losing employment, increased overhead costs during winter, divorce, death, other unexpected expenses). In order to achieve maximum effectiveness it is important to forward the assistance to the family within the shortest time and it should also be flexible and cut to the family’s needs.

**Needs and features of settlements reflected in the program:**

The project is located in HIA’s three temporary family shelters; drop-in centres that give place to project services established in their territories. Features, opportunities, difficulties, cooperation of organisations, operation of informal and institutional systems differ in several aspects in the three settlements (Orosháza, Szolnok, Miskolc). The project’s intention is to take these specific features and needs into account in each location and shape their programs, highlight certain services or push them into the background according to it. It is not only the task of HIA’s centres to take these characteristics and needs into account. Social forums are held in each project location. The forums unite those partner agencies that refer clients to the program – family assistance centres, child welfare services, educational institutions. Target group’s needs, content elements of services are taking shape and being formed in the social forums as well.

**Discussion of project results in the light of numbers**

Different needs and specific features that differ location by location may also be traced if we compare the level of use of each service. During project implementation the location of Orosháza – thanks to its small town character - could call in several other resources in addition to the funds available from the project thus appealing clients could be provided with material assistance. This centre has been offered the biggest assistance by small companies, local enterprises who wished to contribute to program success. Increased chances allow even better-aimed assistance for dwellers of Orosháza and thanks to the higher level of resources in-kind aid could be provided almost two times more often than in Hungary’s third most populated town, Miskolc.

It has also become evident in the social forums what capacity shortages of the given settlement may be taken over by the different services in each project location. Social information counselling was requested by the most individuals in Szolnok. Its main reason is that the settlement’s and the region’s institutional system responsible for family assistance and child welfare services had been going through significant changes during the project period. This period was burdened with trans-
You are not alone - results and lessons of a Danish-Hungarian pilot program

During the elapsed project period 37% of clients were referred to the project by partners (1784 persons). The remaining 3089 persons came from HIA’s own clients. There were differences between project locations in this respect as well. The Miskolc centre received the most clients sent by partner agencies; it also means that less clients of its own were enrolled in the program. It could be explained by the big city character of Miskolc. While in Szolnok or Orosháza clients find it easier to visit the centres directly, this process in Miskolc is mainly ensured through partner agencies.

School social worker – a pilot program within the project:

One of the project’s features is that designed services and program elements can be modified and shaped during program implementation and even new elements can be added if necessary. This kind of attitude and flexibility is not only an opportunity but also an expectation towards HIA. HIA and the project must be able to meet the emerging needs and have to make use of the arising opportunities.

The program element of school social work in Miskolc is a good example for that; this idea presented itself in HIA’s staff members 1.5 years after the program starting. The need was expressed by school workers then HIA elaborated plan of the service and examined if the arising needs could be satisfied with the current institutional system. Experiences showed that problems of children and parents in educational institutions put a big burden on teachers who try to find solutions for these with the means available for them, but it often leads to role conflict (teacher – helper role) or overstepping professional boundaries. On the other hand it is also characteristic of families and children that they are not familiar with the school’s social work program that offers certain services on the spot and focuses not only on families but intends to solve the problems in its given context (teacher, student, parents, school…) as well.

By today more than 360 students have taken part in conflict treatment training, 200 students were given an insight into the secrets of self-knowledge and 40 teachers have become acquainted with types, roots and solution alternatives of conflicts within the frame of school social work. More than 50 children and youngsters have been involved in therapy sessions in order to treat their psychic injuries.

Trust and relationship are being built slowly in this field. HIA can join school-life gradually; staff members are given a chance to carry out professional work step-by-step.

Headway of school social work among program services can be traced well in the above tables. The first two months were characterised by one or two sessions of psychological counselling in Miskolc, but later it slowly changed, and were adjusted to therapy needs of clients arriving from schools. In other centres – where there is no school social work – this service rather preserved its counselling nature.

This form of school social work, where activities are carried out by an external, independent staff and organisation, can offer effective solutions in a social, child protection environment which is connected with behaviour, forms of attitude and is burdened with conflicts as a typical phenomenon in everyday life of educational institutions.

You are not alone - results and lessons of a Danish-Hungarian pilot program

Discussion of project results in the light of numbers

Discussion of project results in the light of numbers
II. Reintegration through the services of the halfway program:

Justification and background of the service:

Today in Hungary social and child protection services badly need programs that can ensure long-term and effective reintegration of clients. Most of the existing services treat the clients’ problems – often in a fire-fighting mode - that made them get into the institutions but do not offer any alternatives for advancement or successful social reintegration. Additionally, there is a constant question of social policy – to what extent shall it develop a certain type of service. Some say that if an institution type is overloaded (e.g. there are not enough places in homeless shelters, applications to temporary shelters exceed the quota by 300-400%), then new institutions should be opened. Others think that effective prevention and reinforcement and creation of reintegration ‘legs’ (e.g. network of halfway apartments) would be the right steps to take.

Mr. Edit Tóth
Family Care Worker, Temporary Family Shelter, Szolnok

Since when have you been working for HIA?
I started my work in HIA’s centre in Szolnok in 2001 and I have been involved in the program since the very beginning, namely November 2007.

What qualification do you have and what is your professional background?
I finished my studies and obtained my social worker qualification 4 years ago. Since then I have taken a special examination; the topic of my thesis was basic child welfare service.

What is the aspect of project “You’re not alone” that distinguishes it from other programs in your opinion?
First of all I wish to emphasize “promptness”. This program allows us to provide prompt assistance to a client if it drops into our centre. Official help is slow and bureaucratic and involves a lot of paperwork and waiting time. As a whole, we can work and help much more effectively within this program.

Could you tell us about a decisive case from your program experiences?
There was a family - father, mother and four children. Following the annual reading of the electricity-meter they received a pay-check for HUF 50,000. They requested payment in instalments and it was approved by the electric company. We undertook immediately to support them with food packages and hygiene kits during these three months. Their extra costs were compensated this way and they did not lose their stability.

HIA elaborated its Reintegration pilot program in 2003 which was further developed within current project and expanded in all the three homes. Six residential properties were purchased and reconstructed and employment of experts (psychologist, lawyer, social worker) who were in charge of follow-up care was also covered from project funds. HIA calls this type of accommodation halfway apartments or halfway houses.

Necessity of reintegration steps/ phases:

Why is it necessary to create different steps within a social service? Why is it not enough to spend one and a half year in a certain type of provision to solve the problems brought by the families?

There are less and less families who get into temporary shelters due to problems that originate from a crisis or a life situation evolved a few months ago. Most of them are forced to use this service based on lasting problems connected to improper level of socialisation. A parent usually had been living in the given situation that he/she intends to escape from for 20-30 years. This process usually starts during their childhood when he/she saw badly fixed behaviour patterns. It is also a frequent phenomenon that though the parents are 30–40 years old, they have minimal work experience or they have never appeared on the labour market before. There are a great number of families where parents grew up under state care and they lack basic skills to tackle all the challenges that threaten most of the families nowadays.

Families that move into temporary shelters have a long way to go in order to achieve significant changes in their lives. Social experts have to perform a hard, consistent and intensive work to make these families able to reintegrate into society successfully. Fields of work with the family include strengthening the family as a structure, discussing problems connected with education of a child, offering housekeeping knowledge, changing incorrectly fixed behaviour patterns brought by them, making parents capable of finding and keeping a job or finding a proper and permanent accommodation.

Discussion of project results: Reintegration through the services of the halfway program
In most cases the available period of 1.5 years is enough to start certain processes and gain new knowledge, new skills and way of thinking deep inside and become permanent in lives of families.

When families leave under temporary care, they often have to move to another settlement so they lose their jobs obtained and all their plans that they dreamed about come to nothing. It also happens very often that the family is obliged to eat up its reserves collected in the home as the only form of accommodation for them is a rented flat with market rates. When leaving the home, the assisting relationship is also over as the overloaded child welfare services are unable to provide the same care – the level of trust, support, atmosphere and time is much less than in the temporary shelter.

Steps/phases of the reintegration pilot project:

- Crisis intervention in the Regional Crisis Centre
- Temporary Family Shelter
- Halfway Care (halfway homes)
- Ensuring flats maintained by local governments or other permanent accommodation

**Level 0 – 1:**

At the time of elaborating the reintegration pilot program in 2003, there were only 3 phases in the process. The Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour established a 30 days’ crisis care for families and single women escaping from family violence in 2005 thus a new possibility emerged to enter the reintegration program in addition to the temporary family shelter (level 1.) This phase was labelled as level 0.

From the aspect of the reintegration pilot program, family shelters are to perform the following tasks:

- **a)** Surveying the family as a system, collecting problems, difficulties and measuring natural support system (0-3 months)
  
  During this phase it is very important that social workers could discover the operation of the family, reasons of getting into the home, resources and problem-solution skills of the family. It is also seen during this phase what connection may social experts establish with the family and to what extent they are authorised to elaborate ways and fields of cooperation.

- **b)** Thinking over and discussing solution alternatives, preparing an exit plan (3-6 months)
  
  It is important for both parties (family, institution) to make a thorough exit plan which outlines tasks to be done to change the family’s situation into positive direction. This work includes the following priority areas:

  - Strengthening and transforming the family system in order that parents could appear in the labour market:
    
    For the sake of the above goal, parents should not only acquire job-seeking techniques but they also must be able to meet requirements connected with regular work attendance. Getting to work every day requires different functioning of the family. The period of switching to this new lifestyle might cause a lot of troubles when parents had not been present in the labour market for more than a year, not to mention those cases when they never had any work experience.

- **Transforming the families’ housekeeping structure, discussing issues connected with parental responsibility, stabilising children’s situation:**
  
  Social workers of HIA’s institutions often experience that positive changes in families’ incomes do not automatically mean that families’ financial situation turns to positive. For example it often happens that the family runs out of money at the same time of the month independently of the fact that they receive unemployment benefit or wages. Therefore it is very important to overview and discuss the families’ housekeeping habits and attitude to money when they move into the home. This is one of the hardest tasks as the families will feel motivated to do this only if a strong feeling of trust is created with the social expert. It is similarly important to discuss children’s situation, to survey what shortcomings or mental injuries they have. Involvement of a psychologist and a developmental teacher is usually necessary and reasonable in this process.

- **c)** Stabilisation period (6 months – 1 year – max. 1.5 years):
  
  A main feature of the stabilisation period is that the parents already have concrete and realistic ideas on what to achieve during their stay in the home, what means they need and what steps must be taken for it; a few of their plans have already been realised (e.g. finding job). During this period it is essential that the family should see the outcome and sense of working. They should see their saved funds, positive results of children’s development and their positive attitude towards school.

  If there is an empty halfway apartment at the end of the stabilisation period, applications are invited which are judged by the home’s professional team. According to HIA’s experiences 20% of families staying in the home are able to get into a condition to apply successfully for moving into a halfway apartment. In practice it means that 2-3 families submit applications at the same time for one apartment.

- **d)** Application process:
  
  In order that a family could apply for a halfway home, it has to meet the following conditions:

  - Registered permanent job
  - Staying for a minimum of six months in the temporary shelter
  - Regular monthly pre-savings undertaken by the family
  - Complete and duly payment of the symbolic rent
  - Clear-cut plans for the future

  Parents receive a 15-page application form that they have to fill in alone without any help. Application data cover all the results of the family that have been achieved so far, its housekeeping and plans for the future in yearly breakdown. The family decides how long they wish to live in the halfway apartment (max. 5 years) and how much money they can save. It is also important to demonstrate how the family can move on from the halfway apartment.
**Level 2: Description of halfway apartments and the work performed in them:**

In case of successful application the family undersigns a contract with the institution, it contains the services that are still available for the family (psychological, legal counselling, family care). The contract also stipulates objectives to be reached, way of payment of the overhead and other costs and the duration of the family’s stay in the apartment. Families report monthly on the events of the month, children’s situation and their plans for the next month. Participation of the family in the program is being supervised by the professional team annually, paying attention to the fact if the original objectives are being realised or not.

After moving to the halfway home the most important task of the family is to separate itself from and become independent of the institution. Weekly – or even more frequent - meetings that were typical in the home are becoming rarer and are finally reduced to one monthly conversation.

Lives of families are positively affected by the fact that they get accommodation for a longer period. It can lead to creating and realising new plans. Most of the parents undertake some kind of training or school (e.g. obtaining GCE or a qualification that can stabilise and strengthen their stand in the labour market).

However, this level also has its difficulties. Sometimes families can hardly cope with the strained tempo which is necessary for realising their goals - strict housekeeping, duly paid public utility costs and ceasing services that used to assist the family while they had been living in the temporary home.

**Level 3: Ensuring flats owned and maintained by local governments or other permanent accommodation**

Families applying for halfway apartments have all kinds of plans. Some of them intend to buy an own flat, some wish to move into a flat maintained by local government. There was a family that undertook to save HUF 50,000 every month and also increased its family cash month by month; they wanted to purchase a flat of their own.

Experiences of the project show that most families could buy self-owned flats when they left halfway apartments. some families moved to rented flats or flats maintained by local governments and only one family moved to relatives to solve its accommodation.

It is a big professional achievement for HIA that none of the families that had left halfway apartments had to return to temporary family shelters later.

**Other comments:**

None of the families applied for the five years’ maximum period among those who moved into HIA’s halfway apartments. They used the assistance for an average of two years. It is worth considering what would have happened if families hadn’t been able to use this service. some families would have moved to another family shelter 200 km away in order to stay together with the children. It would have also caused the husband’s loss of employ-ment and the danger of not finding a new job in the other settlement. Single parent families that had been under HIA’s care would have moved to rented flats. Their monthly expenses could not be covered by their incomes even if the mother has a job and salary. They would eat up their savings collected in the home. This sum would run out in 6-8 months and the family would apply for admission to another family shelter. And the vicious circle continues.

It is important to see what significant expenses arise again and again if these families do not get further handholds, stairs where they can step on and become wandering families who move from one temporary shelter to the other for years in absence of other alternatives. They have to restart their lives in each home.

**HIA’s standpoint is that rethinking of and expanding the system of so-called ‘social tenement flats’ (i.e. flats maintained by local governments and rented by families in need) could make exit of those living under permanent care much more efficient. It should be considered what services are offered for families that lost their homes or do not have accommodation due to other reasons. Temporary family shelter and the system of halfway apartments/houses should automatically be built on the system of social tenement flats maintained by local governments of the given region and it is also necessary to organise deliberate and reasoned programs to search for other possible accommodations (e.g. cooperation chances of depopulated villages with temporary family shelters).**

The complex care of a 4-member family for one year costs HUF 3 million in a temporary family shelter in the present system and when this care is over, the family most likely continues or rather restarts its life in another temporary shelter.

In a halfway apartment care of families would cost 50% less and the chances of successful reintegration are much higher.
III. Children development in temporary family shelters:

Antecedents:
Temporary family shelters provide complex care for the client families according to needs. It includes accommodation, contribution to or paying the whole amount of catering, travelling to school, kindergarten, organising free-time activities and covering other costs connected with family life. It is essential in the children’s development.

What qualification do you have and what is your professional background?

I am a teacher by profession and I also have a qualification in mental health. I used to work as a teacher for 25 years. What is the aspect of project “You’re not alone” that distinguishes it from other programs in your opinion?

It provides several opportunities that we wouldn’t have been able to offer from normative support. Development work is the most important part of the program for me. We treat problematic children and our main consideration is not simply their school results. We must be flexible. Each of these children is confronted with different expectations, difficulties, prejudices and they also have to fit in a new community. The children make us realize and rethink a lot of things.

Could you tell us about a decisive case from your program experiences?

Instead of a concrete story I have to tell that none of the days are the same here in the shelter. There is a lot of bitterness, it is not a joyful job but we have our little successes every day and we learnt to appreciate these.

of temporary family shelters is sufficient – both in respect of qualifications and numbers – to ensure proper physical and mental development of children. Are the educational and health systems able to replace, correct shortcomings and develop children with multiple disadvantages? Is it necessary to involve extra resources and experts into children’s development? may a temporary shelter be the right scene for that? In project “You’re not alone” there are several program elements that try to widen children’s development opportunities. HIA started a kind of ‘mini’ program to survey abilities of children staying in the home and development activities were also launched with different techniques. The program in Orosháza is of special interest within the program as it could involve developmental pedagogue in the activities. Results of this program are represented hereunder.

Children’s situation:
Children who get into the home are confronted with several problems especially if they arrived from another settlement. These problems include discovering their new environment, keeping rules prevailing in the home, getting acquainted with the new kindergarten, school, accepting their classmates and teachers.

The new schoolbooks, methods, tools might cause further difficulties at school in the process of learning. It should also be added that these children and youngsters had gone through mental traumas before they got to these institutions.

Experiences show that these families have become multiply disadvantaged by the time they receive assistance.

As parents, teachers and care workers, HIA’s staff members see how much these children differ from each other, ways of their development and unfolding are widely unlike. Those who are particularly talented, show extreme shortcomings or conspicuous among others are given accentuated attention.

However, it requires time for staff members to get acquainted with them, to know their characteristics and understand their problems. Most of children staying in the home struggle with learning disabilities that derive from their socio-cultural background, emotional traumas, school absences and change of educational institution.

It is a considerable disadvantage in proper assistance of children that there are no known data about their abilities. They do not have the test results issued by Committee for Assessing Learning Abilities and Rehabilitation. Thus the problem of how youngsters and children could be assessed effectively emerged in the beginning of the program.

Children’s assessment in the homes:
Based on several years’ experimentations, the HIA’s staff members elaborated a test material measuring key competences of children within the program “You’re not alone” and it was completed with other tests proposed by experts to survey partial skills (e.g. tests for dyscalculia and dyslexia). The test results are influenced by the actual emotional, motivational and cognitive state of the child.

Assessment sheets were prepared in the centre in Orosháza by special needs educator and developmental teacher for three age groups: 6-7-8 years old, 9-10-11 years old and 12-13-14 years old children. These assessments have been being performed in all three project locations since then. Control tests are also made every three months but real results of development may be seen after six months only or in optimal case after one year.

Screening forms help to disclose 16 partial skills which are the following: general knowledge, writing, motion coordination, cognitive abilities, body scheme, left-right discrimination, eye-hand coordination, figure-ground discrimination, arranging spatial information, numeric memory, acoustic memory, visual memory, seriality, figure-sight and spatial situations, repeating difficult words, auditory differentiating ability.
Results reflected by numbers:

Input and output testing show that partial skills improved in 81% of children who received any kind of development. It also became evident from the assessments that partial skills of children who did not participate in any development activities declined in 90% of cases despite the fact that temporary family shelter did their best to provide peaceful atmosphere for the families.

Analysing results of temporary shelters, it became also clear for the HIA’s staff members that rate of partial skills’ development was much bigger in Orosháza where sessions were held by developmental teacher. There was one partial field (e.g. seriality) where level of development was 10% but writing motion coordination reached 60% in Orosháza.

Different programs and development activities are integrated into children’s lives very quickly and easily. Children became fond of playful atmosphere and sessions tailored to individual needs and they eagerly wait for the next occasion.
You are not alone - results and lessons of a Danish-Hungarian pilot program

The line chart reflects very well the varying levels of children’s partial skills. Curves of input and control assessments are similar but show development in each area. Their degrees are naturally different.

Input test data show low levels in fields of cognitive abilities, writing motion coordination, seriality, eye and hand coordination. While planning development activities, these were given bigger emphasis which resulted in very positive changes. Apart from cognitive abilities, the expected 75% performance was exceeded in all other fields.

Significant development occurred in fields of figure-ground discrimination, arranging spatial information, figure-sight and spatial situations, repeating difficult words and auditory differentiating ability.

On the grounds of tests further development is needed in cognitive abilities, eye-hand coordination and acoustic memory. 80% or 80+% results of other areas are appropriate.

During assessments developmental teacher of the program experienced that most of children find it difficult to open up, they are usually uncertain, their task comprehension is weak, and attention is diffuse. Therefore big emphasis was laid on establishing good relationships and properly motivating environment. Apart from partial skills that were tested, attention has to be developed in each case as it significantly influences performance of children. Development of memory and its maintenance is also present in each session as it has significant role in school studies.

Based on the above results it can be stated that aimed professional development is necessary in temporary family shelters and remarkable advancement may be achieved that has significant influence on children’s future walk of life.

Assessment tests of the three project locations show that developmental teachers and/or special needs educators are highly needed in this type of institutions as well.

IV. Program’s impact on temporary family shelters:

Current project is the first international project in life of Hungarian Interchurch Aid that involved three institutions of the same type. The project is closely connected to the work of temporary shelters thus staff members working in the homes have a direct insight into and experience of its impacts, methods and difficulties. Two of these impacts will be presented hereunder; they will have a long-term effect on HIA’s professional work.

Importance of indicators in field of services receiving normative state support:

Concept of indicators started to spread in Hungary parallel with the possibility to submit applications to the European Union. Indicators are usually present as the necessary bad in lives of organisations; something that should be reached, something they have to stick to, the failure to realise them must be denied and it also requires tremendous administration work. HIA experiences in its professional work that supervision focuses on the sea of numbers and if the charts are perfect the project is considered successful from the aspect of monitoring.

Indicators are determined under current project as well but not the way it is usual. At the beginning of the program DanChurchAid (DCA) staff-member and HIA’s coordinator together with the professional staff defined what reasonable indicators could prove realisation of goals undertaken in the application and how the actual results and impacts reached by the program can be measured. During monitoring visits HIA’s and DCA’s coordinator spent hours to find the right indicator to the right goal.
This process – though it was tiring and hard – made HIA’s professionals think of how much it is missing in case of services receiving normative support where it is not really determined how to measure realisation of goals stipulated by law. Even the goals are not unambiguous in many ways. In these situations different protocols try to offer some kind of guidance. At the same time, if the input data are not determined, it is very difficult to measure whether there is any development or leap forward and whether we got closer to the originally set-out objectives or not. The question of reintegration comes up very often nowadays. How it may be measured if a given service or method goes to the right direction and it is really able to contribute to successful reintegration of clients? Maybe, it is not that difficult as one would think. One indicator could be, for example, “How many new individuals did the client get acquainted with during the last one month?”

In child protection service it would be especially important that experts could work with proper, qualitative indicators. HIA staff experiences year by year that a family is staying in the third or fourth temporary family shelter but there are no input indicators, base of comparison either for the parents or for children.

Professional staff has learnt from current project that there is no need to be afraid of indicators because if we determine them properly, they make professional work and results measurable. It is very important in social work where results are not spectacular but it does make a difference what the normative funds are spent for by the institutions.

HIA, as a National Methodology Temporary Family Shelter intends to play a significant role in drafting those indicators that might serve as a firm ground for professional work. It is important to draw up measurable goals and the related reasonable indicators for services that receive normative state support.

Chances of “empowerment” in legal regulation of services:

The word “empowerment” means to “enable” and “delegate power” to the client in order it could be able to make decisions in its own businesses and to obtain means and support for effective solution of its difficulties.

Legal regulations formulate frames of care in certain social and child protection services - number of experts, material conditions, size of dwelling spaces, minimum levels of physical care. These frames appear as compulsory conditions for each client. Frames imply protection for the client as he knows what care he is supposed to get and frames imply protection for the given institution as it knows what to provide for the client.

Legal frames, however, also imply intense rigidity. They do not take into account the independence and resources of clients getting into care. It might happen that a client who used to be able to get foodstuffs, purchase detergents and ensure clothes for his family will become dependent on aid due to the compulsorily provided services.

During project monitoring, HIA got several feedbacks from its Danish partner agency to leave independence of families as much as possible and to maintain motivating nature of the assistance received. They had the same request concerning clients being accommodated in the temporary family shelters.

Hungarian Interchurch Aid’s Methodology Centre initiated amendment of legal regulations in connection with the service and requested the ministry in charge to allow more competence and space for workers of temporary shelters to decide the level and intensity of assistance to be provided for the clients. Proposals were accepted, the regulation was amended and the ‘full range service’ has become ‘full range service according to needs’ by decree. Unfortunately the Methodology Centre receives several warnings from this field that those who perform monitoring are unable to handle this permissive and flexible frame. As a consequence, they still haul institutions up for a full range of service.

It might be explained by the fear and bad habit of monitoring authorities who think that institutions try to save money on clients and that is why they do not get the necessary services.

What do clients think about it? Has anyone asked them? How are the clients’ standpoints taken into account when planning a certain service? How do they take part in developing different services and how their needs and thoughts appear in regulations? These are also important issues when the question of “empowerment” comes up. Professional consultations with DCA highlighted these issues and it is evident that services provided by temporary family shelters are to be developed in this respect as well.
V. Difficulties and solutions during program implementation

Reaching the target group

The project intended to select beneficiaries whose problems and crisis may be solved within a short period (3 months) by the help of short and effective intervention offered by program services. HIA wanted to avoid long-lasting assistance and did not want to provide services in situations where these could only serve as fire-fighting and would not have had a positive effect on actual problems. Partner organisations sending clients into the program also took part in the screening process.

It was very difficult to select the right target groups, and determine the situations when the service can be effective and when it cannot. One year following the beginning of the program it was still not clear for partner organisations whom the project can help, whom can be referred to it. It is an experience of the program that multiple problems, restricted and improper means of social experts made the fire-fighting approach automatic. For several months some partners had not been able to refer clients to whom the project could have provided lasting assistance. However, regular professional discussions, phone consultations and keeping strict professional frames concerning who may use the service, brought the intended result. Stakeholder organisations finally understood and sensed to which clients the service might be beneficial.

Impacts of economic and social crisis

The economic world crisis influences project results and its clients as well. Objectives that were set out in connection with clients’ employment became questionable. Thousands of workplaces ceased to exist in the regions where projects are located. HIA’s centres could experience that 90% of adults living in the homes and having had jobs became unemployed within a month at the news of the crisis. Companies that employed mainly women as seasonal labourers (that was almost the only employment opportunity for a lot of women accommodated in the homes) started to search for male labourers only. Centres also had to face with the fact that clients who had finished only 8 grades of elementary school could not get any employment, as companies that used to employ them on assembly lines as trained workers also closed down.

Crisis has its effects on other areas as well. Partner organisations started to send clients (families and individuals) who do not know what they will eat next day. Staff members hear more and more stories about real starving of children, lack of foodstuffs of diabetic patients, failure to purchase life-saving drugs due to lack of money.

Number of clients visiting institutions with these kinds of problems reached such a high level following the crisis that it is impossible to meet their needs; the government has to take part in the solution. HIA increased its available in-kind donations from other sources and tried to satisfy needs by the help of the EU’s Food Security Program and own collections.

SUMMARISING EXPERIENCES OF THE PROGRAM “YOU’RE NOT ALONE” FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF A REFERRAL INSTITUTION

Hungarian Interchurch Aid reached the target group to be involved in the project in two ways:

1. Clients were selected from HIA’s beneficiaries and individuals applying to HIA based on the given criteria.
2. HIA concluded cooperation agreements with 5-7 institutions (per project location) that could send participants to project services from their own clients based on preliminary accord.

The Methodological Child Welfare Centre of the Szolnok Micro-region HR Shared Service Centre’s Multi-Purpose Association has become one of the partners of HIA’s temporary home for families in Szolnok. The Child Welfare Centre has been in good working contacts with the Temporary Home for Families due to its basic tasks stipulated by law. Thanks to the good working relationship, HIA offered and requested the institution to take part in the program “You’re not alone”.

Beneficiaries of the child welfare service include endangered children and families living in the town. A child is considered endangered if his/her healthy physical, mental, moral and emotional development is not ensured in the blood-related family.

The following few sentences reflect and summarise the outside point of view of Mrs. Bakó, Anna Kácsor, leader of the partner organisation, about HIA’s project.

Why did you consider it important to take part in the program?

Having read about the services offered by the program, cooperation was quite evident for us as this program completed the town’s missing services that allow more effective provision and fills up gaps in certain elements of the care system.

Is this program more effective in treating crisis situations?

Children usually become endangered due to the sudden appearance of existential loss—unemployment, sickness, family conflict, violence within the family. In these cases target group requires prompt, concrete and complex assistance which is available in our town only within the frame of the “You’re not alone” program.

In which field do you think cooperation is quick and flexible?

Flexible approach, prompt and concrete assistance have greatly contributed to solving the problems of disadvantaged, endangered children and families facing crisis situations.

Clients of our centre could join the program with the help of intervention sheets. Following prompt phone consultation and making an appointment, target group members were provided with assistance within a very short time, I dare also say immediately.

In what way did organising social forums (regular inter-professional meetings) help you?

Regular meetings of all cooperating organisations promoted cooperation of the Child Welfare Centre with other institutions which contributed to the more effective operation of the signalling system. In connection with the program higher level of contacts has also been established between professionals representing different institutions.

What impact did the program have on the personality of Helpers?

Thanks to the prompt and effective assistance provided by the program, we could experience...
feeling of success together in a different quality. Staff members of the Child Welfare Centre could widen the range of their professional tools by the help of services that were available within the program and it had a positive impact on the professional personality of staff members.

Who could join the program?
In our family care work we more and more often see families with children that are seriously affected by social problems and economic crisis:
- One of the parents became unemployed
- Monthly instalment of their bank loan increased to such a high amount that the family is unable to pay it
- The mother’s income decreases significantly during baby-care
- Divorce, serious family conflict
- Appearance of violence within the family
- Arrears in payment of public utility costs
- Unexpected serious disease in the family

These and other similar problem situations generated so serious disturbances in lives of families that healthy physical, mental, emotional and moral development of children being raised in these families became endangered.

We could provide effective help to our families through directing them to the program services.

What “bits” of the assistance would you like to highlight?

Bit 1:
Parents were raising five children in a family with multiple disadvantages. The mother was receiving child care allowance, the father was working but then the tragedy occurred: he lost his job. But trouble does not come alone – one of the school-age children took part in a medical screening and he was found to be in urgent need of eye-glasses.

The family’s living was in danger due to the missing salary of the father. Buying the necessary eye-glasses for the child was totally beyond hope.

Our organisation does not have any possibility to provide material assistance to families in such cases.

By the help of HIA’s program, the child received his eye-glasses in due time thus a potentially irreversible damage could be avoided. Owing to this relief the family could tide over the most difficult times and did not have to raise loans or decide whether to pay the overhead costs or buy the glasses for the child. The family did not get into debt-trap; father soon found employment thus the family’s normal functioning was restored.

Bit 2:
A family with two children turned to our service – the mother received child care allowance, the father was working as regular. The income situation and expenditure structure of the family has substantially changed when their baby was born thus the young couple had to realise that they are not able to redeem their foreign currency loan that had been borrowed earlier. The family could tide over this critical period by the help of a short-term (3 months) assistance package (foodstuffs and contribution to overhead costs) provided by the program. During this term the family could restructure their expenses, mobilised extra resources and they could keep their apartment.

Bit 3:
A single mother is raising her secondary school student alone. She lost her job not long ago. They got into a very difficult material situation; it was questionable if the child could continue his studies.

She received help in paying her overhead costs during the critical period in the frame of the program.

Bit 4:
A mother is raising her secondary school student alone. She lost her job not long ago. They got into a very difficult material situation; it was questionable if the child could continue his studies.

She received in-kind assistance within the program including food aid and contribution to school expenses. The mother also received mental health support so that she could treat her situation.

What would be the consequences if these services were not available?
Before the program, the similarly prolonged crisis situation of families deepened the endangerment of the children and sometimes led to break-up of families or removing the child from the family in extreme cases.

What do you think about the future of these services in social politics?
I consider it very important that more and more service-types should be created in the future which are prompt, flexible, tailored to the needs of the individuals and the families and allow due professional frames for effective intervention. I consider the crisis-intervention service combined with in-kind donations and reintegration services especially valuable for disadvantaged children.

Our child-welfare centre is working with similar tools but our professional capacity is insufficient to meet the existing needs (e.g. coaching, organising community programs, development of children in groups and individually, couple and family therapy).
ASSISTANCE WITHIN THE NGO SECTOR - CASE STUDY

At the time of fixing and wording professional goals of the project called “You’re not alone” – launching support services for disadvantaged children, youth and families with staff members of Hungarian Interchurch Aid and when trying to draw up in what way it offers more than the available services and the operating institutional system (child protection and social institutions) stipulated by law, flexibility and promptness were highlighted among keystones of the project.

Under flexibility we mean a care process tailored to individual needs that goes far beyond legal frames of a given institutional care (its compulsory provisions, services and time frames). Intensity of services constantly follows the beneficiary’s needs and does not deprive him/her of independence and autonomy.

Promptness refers to the time that passes by between problem realisation, definition and intervention. Timely assistance may prevent further aggravation of the situation and appearance of further difficulties and it also helps individuals and families to take presence of problems in their lives as a natural and ‘normal’ phenomenon.

Impacts of the above two factors in HIA’s social work will be presented through the following case – which is a sad family tragedy on the one hand and a helping process on the other that takes clients’ “needs” into account as much as possible.

According to the generally accepted rules, names and some personal data were changed in the case report.

Background:
A mother (named Eszter) with her four children arrived to HIA’s temporary family home on a spring day. The reason that forced them to leave their original home place was the aggressiveness of the life partner. The man constantly molested and abused Eszter both mentally and physically and recently shut her off from the outside world, isolated her from others. Owing to the situation evolved, scholastic records of children also declined.

Temporary Family Home:
The family requested help of the child welfare service in order to get rid of the abuser and continue their life under peaceful conditions. The child welfare service directed them to one of HIA’s temporary homes where they could move in a few days following the signal of the problem.

Eszter and her children could soon fit into the home’s everyday life. Absence of the aggressor launched very positive changes in the life of the family. Children were evidently relieved, the mother calmed down. Inner operation of the family has strengthened which is a necessary base for building a new life. The one year’s accommodation offered by the social care, the home’s professional staff and the services provided by them (psychological and legal counselling, family care) were all extra tools for the family to achieve the following goals:

• Processing traumas caused by abuse
• Creating a stable family structure and plans for the future
• Addressing learning difficulties of children

An active family care process is needed to realise all these goals and considering the tasks to be performed, the one-year period does not seem to be too long. Life should be restored for a family that had lost almost everything: home, safety, companionships and peer groups.

An illness that changed the frameworks:
A few months after moving into the home, it turned out that Eszter has a tumour in her body that should be operated on and then she should receive chemotherapy. Eszter felt that their situation was hopeless. She, however, could take courage from her children and from the fact that while she is in hospital, her children are in a safe place.

Owing to the new situation, the frameworks of assistance had to be widened. These frames exceeded the range of services provided by temporary homes. Costs of travelling to the hospital for treatments, medicines, special diet and vitamins amounted to several hundred thousand Hungarian forints. The mother was considering the following solution alternatives:

- She applies for public health benefit that could partly solve her financial problems
- She applies for extraordinary social support at the local government
- She applies for public health benefit that could partly solve her financial problems

With a view to recovery, it was important to undergo the operation as soon as possible and also to have the necessary medicines and supplements at hand. The natural support system, in this case, is limited to Eszter’s mother but she is unable to provide material help. Due to the bad financial situation of local municipalities, it is also difficult to get extraordinary social support and it can be applied for only once that would not solve the present problem of the family. Public health benefit would partly cover costs of medicines but does not cover that of the supplements. If the family takes out a loan, they might get into irreversible indebtedness.

The possibility to widen the frames was offered by the “You’re not alone” program, which provides temporary assistance in emergency situations.
Services:
The disease rewrote plans that were defined by the mother in order they could leave the home after the expiry of the one year.

Assistance to the family had a twofold focus:

1. Strict family budget was prepared together with the family to cover extra costs. HIA determined a 6 months’ frame of material assistance to cover the costs of vitamins and supplements.

2. The mother – due to her illness - could only partly meet her tasks that should be performed by a single mother with four children. Social worker and psychologist helped the family to tide over crisis situations. Learning difficulties were also faced by the children due the situation evolved.

HIA employed a special-need teacher in order to overcome these problems.

All staff members helped in nursing and education of children. Tasks were distributed and coordinated among the staff workers month by month paying attention not to take over more duties from the mother than required by the situation.

Following the operation, the mother’s state improved very quickly, she became stronger month by month and finally she was declared recovered by doctors.

Reintegration model-program – role of halfway homes in social care:

Eszter’s recovery allowed dealing with the future plans of the family. It was especially important as the family’s temporary accommodation period was to expire in three months.

The family had proved during the former period that they could take the opportunities offered by HIA. Results of the road that they had made so far - breaking out from an abusing relationship, overcoming a serious disease, restructuring the family’s life, fighting everyday challenges (economising money, school achievements of children) - showed that the family was up to independence and was able to organise everyday life. They would also be able to maintain a flat, pay the overhead costs and undertake pre-savings to realise their future plans.

Based on the above conditions, the family was offered an opportunity to apply for a halfway apartment in the frame of the program realised from the support of the Velux Foundations; they can stay for another 5 years in this apartment and further strengthen themselves until they find a chance to move to their own property.

Application of the family was accepted by the professional team thus the family could get ready to move to the halfway house during the summer of 2008.

If Eszter and her children had not been involved in a program like this, they could have chosen from among one of the following opportunities:

- Moving to a rented flat - in this case all the family’s savings are paid for the rent which is about HUF 30,000 per month.
- Moving to the temporary home of another town where they can stay for another one-one and half year. In this case the family should restart everything from the very beginning. New school and new place is a further trauma both for the children and the mother. The family must become familiar with all the opportunities offered by the new town and rebuild its interrelationships. By the time it is all done, the care period might expire again and they would be obliged to move to the next home.
- The family moves back to the abuser and the dread starts again.

New beginning, new chances:

Moving of the family into the new house was preceded by careful preparations. HIA introduced its program to all the affected parties in the settlement (neighbours, school, and the municipality) in order that the family should cope with as little prejudice as possible. Co-ordination meetings were held with the local government and its institutions as well.

The family could successfully fit into the life of the small community of their street first and that of the village as well. It has been a joyful experience that instead of prejudice or rejection, both close and far neighbours expressed their helpfulness. It was glad to hear how much love and attention was received by the family from the people living in their street. Everyone in the settlement helped the family, some with fruits, others with small cakes or a reassuring smile.

It gave further strength to the family to build long-term plans. They felt that they found their home. They planned to buy a house of their own from their pre-savings in the settlement in the future.

Finding a home is extremely important in the life of a family – feeling that they are free, knowing that they do not live from day to day and they have a place to lay their head in the long run. Feeling that they can accurately and duly cover their expenses and they have some extra money for their future plans. Children felt this safety. They found friends, joined in the life of the settlement and even yielded sport results for the village. They felt that they were important, they could be relied on; they got support but they also gave help when they cut the grass of their neighbour or went to gather the crops of the fruit trees of another neighbour. This feeling of safety also had positive effects on scholastic records of children.
Fate creates another difficult situation:
Unfortunately the mother’s illness broke out again after one year. Treatments started again but the family was optimistic. HIA did its best to support the family through purchasing medicines and supplements and decreasing their expenses by the help of in-kind donations like clothes and non-perishable foodstuffs.

As the illness became stronger and stronger, mental burden of the family – including both grown-ups and children - was also growing. HIA lent a helping hand in undergoing and surviving all these. Eszter’s mother also joined the family and took part in nursing her.

Eszter died after prolonged and serious illness in spring of 2010. Her death tried not only close family members but staff members as well. Children and grandmother, who was taking care of them, were provided help by HIA’s psychologist to process their great loss.

Human dignity in all circumstances:
The reader may well ask several questions concerning the above case. May we talk about results in this case? Why does HIA present its project through this story? What was the point of halfway apartment?...

If we look back to the last few years of the family, we see that it had to face a series of crises and difficulties – molestations, abuse, moving, serious illness, losing the mother.

What did, however, assistance mean to this family? The services provided allowed family members to take up the fight with the difficulties while the mother could stay together with her children. The family did not fall apart, children did not get into deviant groups, did not become truants. The family found a new home. They could live through together the beginning of a new future. Mother could fight in a worthy, family circle until the last minute receiving the biggest help from her mother and children.

It was a difficult but not senseless period for the children. There is tomorrow, there is a base and there are goals and a model in front of the children and it gives them strength to move on.

Family was surrounded by a constantly changing helping and assisting environment that allows/allowed them not to give up their results having achieved so far. Grandmother took over the “role” and tasks of the mother. The whole provision system exemplarily cooperated in the legal procedure connected with it under HIA’s coordination.

The greatest result is that – though the mother cannot be with her children any longer – we still can talk about family, togetherness, plans and image of the future. The firm base to this image is offered by the program, the halfway home and its services.

“RESULT OF CARE” – FROM AN EXPERT’S POINT OF VIEW

National Methodology Temporary Family Shelter run by Hungarian Interchurch Aid has been following ability development of children staying in the temporary homes with distinguished attention since 2007. Staff members of the centre were confronted with new tasks due to the undertaken job – that is to change school results of these children into positive direction during the one and a half year of their stay in the home.

The time being spent by these children in the temporary home for families is a good opportunity to provide support adjusted to the maturation process of the given age-group. HIA’s staff members consider it their main task to make all social and material conditions available that are needed for internal maturation and development of children.

Initial steps
The psychologist working in HIA’s Temporary Home for Families in Miskolc first of all performed intelligence testing (MAWGYI-R) in order to measure children’s abilities. Its results showed that IQ of children was between 58 and 126 during the period of 2007-2010. Due to the huge differences between children, individual treatment has become a priority criterion of development sessions.

In 2008 the above evaluation tool was completed with a test method that is able to measure development level of psychic functions necessary for successful learning from 6 years of age. It was elaborated by a special needs educator – developmental teacher. The test is elaborated to survey the ability profile of children in three different age groups (6-8 years, 9-11 years and 12-14 years old). The test can be taken and interpreted by social workers and its result shapes the course of how to assist the child’s development. Teamwork of teacher, psychologist, parent, developmental teacher and social worker allows development of the child’s abilities and contribute to firm and lasting acquiring of studies.

Experiences:
Difficulties to involve parents:
Involvement of parents and their willingness to cooperate in purposeful ability development of the child is of changing intensity in the temporary homes for families. Parents usually encourage the child to take part in free-time activities and development sessions offered by the home but further cooperation often encounters difficulties.
Mrs. Vörös, Rita Dajka
Family Care Worker, Temporary Family Shelter, Miskolc
Since when have you been working for HIA?
I was employed by HIA in 2000 and I have been participating in the program since 2009.
What qualification do you have and what is your professional background?
I am a social pedagogue by professional background but I also have a qualification of preschool teacher and I am specialised in mental health improvement as well.
What is the aspect of project “You’re not alone” that distinguishes it from other programs in your opinion?
I used to work with families accommodated in the shelter earlier. Compared to it, now I have a much more free scope within this program. The spectrum of activities is much wider; we are in contact with several sending institutions, schools and homes. Thanks to this closer cooperation, we are able to help our clients in a more complex way.
Could you tell us about a decisive case from your program experiences?
Once we received a father with a four month’s old baby and a five years old girl who had been left by their mother. The man lost his job as he was forced to take care of his children. He asked our assistance in order he could cater for diapers, baby formula, and non-perishable foodstuffs to tide the children. He used to work with families accommodated in the shelter earlier. Compared to it, now I have a much more free scope within this program. The spectrum of activities is much wider; we are in contact with several sending institutions, schools and homes. Thanks to this closer cooperation, we are able to help our clients in a more complex way.

Nine months had passed and father only periodically used the available services thus these did not have any conspicuous results. Benji started first grade, his stuttering was still present, he could not hold the pencil orderly, he often confused left and right directions and he also had letter recognition problems…

During the available timeframe there would have been an opportunity to treat Benji’s stuttering, developing his body scheme, pencil-holding, seriality and orientation skills in close cooperation with the father. Did the father think about it?

Development activities in the home:
Following the test-making, it becomes obvious which skills of the given child should be strengthened. Staff members of the home organise individual and small-group sessions that always focus on developing a certain partial skill. During these sessions staff members lean on abilities of the child in which he/she showed outstanding performance. Children meet staff members every week within the above-mentioned frames. Each session lasts about 45 minutes. Experience-based activities are made more exciting by the help of illustrated exercise books, arts and crafts occupation, ball games and movement activities.

It is important to stress that the sessions imply planned and deliberate organising of playful tasks which support development of partial skills surveyed. Helping professionals (pedagogue, psychologist, developmental teacher, social worker) greatly contributed to the efficiency of children’s development; in case the child’s performance was below the average, they used corrective methods and if it was necessary, they proposed to prepare an expert opinion.

(I is 3 o’clock p.m. Laci is knocking on the office door. HIA’s staff member asks whom he wants to see. Laci answers with a smiling face: I came to play with aunt Betti. Aunt Betti asks for a few minutes until she collects tools necessary for the activities as it is Laci’s attention that will be in the focus today. The door of the group study-room is opening. Laci knows that the following 45 minutes is only his and he is eager to see what they will play today. He sits to the table to his usual place where he sees the toys prepared for him. First he starts telling what happened with him since the last meeting with aunt Betti, then takes the colourful small sticks and disks in his hands to make the same pattern as aunt Betti. He is shouting with joy when he succeeds. Experience of the first game is followed by a second, a third… Laci knows that board game means the end of the session. He would like to win anyhow so he pays all his attention to observing the rules. When he is able to get the victory over aunt Betti, he suddenly jumps up and hugs her. He is asking with bright eyes — When will we meet again? Aunt Betti tells him — like every week – at 4 p.m. on Monday. They say goodbye to one another, the door of the study-room is closing but the experience of joyful moments will be theirs again one week later.)

Process of developing children’s partial skills:
The first screening test is made with each child who completed 6th years within 1 month following their moving in; by the help of the test actual development level of 15 partial skills may be surveyed. (The measuring tool used from 12 years of age does not survey writing motion-coordination and body scheme.) As an addition to the above the Goodenough method of Draw-a-person-test is also applied which helps experts to learn about new aspects of...
the child’s intelligence. Based on its results, intelligence of children showed in drawing is between 43 and 116 (average intelligence level manifested in drawings is 77); the age showed by drawings is 24% lower than the actual age of children (e.g., a 9 years old child’s age is equivalent to 6.8 years based on his drawing).

The test is being repeated every three months which contradicts to the experts’ opinion who claim that the same test should be made at least with 6 months’ intervals. However, moving in and out from temporary homes is a steady process and the 6 months’ interval is too wide to follow the child’s development in several cases. It might be a risk factor that the family moves out earlier than the child’s development span and efficiency of the development activities could be seen. The change in ability profile is always evaluated by comparison of the first and last test results:

Changes in children’ partial skills

The diagram shows comparison results of 25 children, out of them 11 boys and 14 girls (40% aged between 6-8, 16% aged between 9-11, 44% over 12).

Based on the results of the first survey, 32% of children (8 persons) performed under optimal level between 6-8, 16% aged between 9-11, 44% over 12). The test is being repeated every three months which contradicts to the experts’ opinion who claim that the same test should be made at least with 6 months’ intervals. However, moving in and out from temporary homes is a steady process and the 6 months’ interval is too wide to follow the child’s development in several cases. It might be a risk factor that the family moves out earlier than the child’s development span and efficiency of the development activities could be seen. The change in ability profile is always evaluated by comparison of the first and last test results:

Further results

Role-taking of HIA’s Temporary Family Shelter in following partial skills of children resulted in a deeper overview of a field that helped to observe children’s development progress differing from the average more efficiently with the involvement of the necessary experts.

Observing children’s skills, their school progress and psychological testing showed signs of learning difficulties, integration and behaviour problems in most cases. If the school did not request expert opinion of the Educational Counselling Service (though there were signs of learning disability), social worker of the home tried to act on the child’s behalf in the child’s best interest in the frame of personal consultation and initiated that development services were made available to him/her.

Testing and developing partial skills do not belong to the social worker’s competences thus a developmental pedagogue was employed by the program. She assists work of the project team in the home by doing PSMT therapy (Planned Sensomotor Training) focusing on the prevention aspect of early development.

Further plans include widening stock of development tools as they may result in a more effective assistance by offering multiple experiences from different aspects for children. As a cost-saving method the home’s staff members created toys with their own hands that made the sessions even more colourful. Development activities were soon integrated into the everyday life of the Temporary Family Shelter. Staff members see the development and see the existing need to make these services more colourful. Development activities were soon integrated into the everyday life of the Temporary Family Shelter. Staff members see the development and see the existing need to make these services more colourful.

HIA hopes that professionals who took part in development activities based on their qualification and achieved positive results with the children will be included in the obligatory staff of temporary family shelters by the help of new regulations. On the other hand HIA’s methodology staff members trust that the necessary resources will also be available for all temporary homes to employ these professionals.
**LIST OF HIA’S PROPOSALS TO AMEND LAW REGULATIONS AND PRACTICES**

### “Full range service if necessary” instead of “full range service”

**Background:**
Government Decree No. 133/1997. (29.07.) on fees and compensations of basic child welfare services and specialised child welfare services providing personal care and the evidences necessary for claiming these. Article 13(4) “If the child accommodated in temporary shelter for children or families receives catering in another institution, the temporary shelter for families or children refunds costs of catering for the service-providing institution to the extent of the amount of personal compensation to be paid there.”

Based on the above, if the family is unable to cover the costs of child catering, the temporary shelter for families is obliged to pay it.

**Proposal:**
Article 13. (4) of Government Decree No. 133/1997. (29.07.) - on fees and compensations of basic child welfare services and specialised child welfare services providing personal care and the evidences necessary for claiming these – should be removed from the order.

**Justification:**
Temporary family shelters had to provide full range service before 1st January 2010 for client families. The related law and order did not allow social experts to consider situation, resources, income of families and decide what services should be offered for them based on these details. The full range service stipulated by law often decreased the families’ motivation to solve their own problems through family care. Principle of empowerment and principle of minimal intervention could not prevail in family care.

Based on its gathered professional experiences HIA’s Methodology Centre successfully argued for ceasing the ‘full range service’ and the law specifies ‘full range service if necessary’ from 1st January 2010. It also justifies the amendment of the above mentioned government decree.

### Capacity-based financing instead of headcount-based financing

**Background:**
Bcb) section of Article 12 of Appendix No. 3 to Act CXXX/2009 says the following in connection with accounting normative state support provided for temporary family shelters:

“Determining number of clients: during planning phase estimated annual number of service days divided by 365; during accounting phase total number of service days based on client registration forms divided by 365”.

Based on the signals of HIA’s methodology centre it has been completed with the following:

“Number of clients provided for by foster parents or temporary family shelters cannot exceed 100% of the capacity stipulated in the operation permit.”

**Proposal:**
Introducing capacity-based financing

**Justification:**
The current regulation forces maintainers and leaders of temporary shelters to select families based on their numbers due to economic considerations. According to legal regulations 1 family must be accommodated in 1 room thus it often happens that a family of 3 members is admitted by the institution into a room for 5. In this case all the rooms of the home (with total capacity for 40 persons) are occupied but the institution may apply for state norms only for 38 persons. Due to the declining public financing, admission of families might be decided not on professional grounds but based on number of family members and some families might be rejected so that the home could perform maximum capacity. Amendment is also supported by the fact that currently this is the only social service in Hungary that admits whole families and not individuals.

### Temporary family shelters – rethinking the system

**Background:**
Temporary care offers solution in cases when the given individual or family would not be able to settle its problem without complex professional help. Main objective of temporary accommodation is to make client’s reintegration into society possible and make him/her an active member of society again.

**Proposal:**
• New temporary shelters should be established in limited number, taking only regional and strategic standpoints and needs into account
• The period of stay in temporary care should be determined depending on the target groups
• In addition to the temporary family shelter the halfway model should also be integrated into the normative financing system as an essential part of the system of temporary family shelters
• Number of apartments included in the halfway system should be increased – utilising flats owned by local governments according to possibilities – as this is a model which may offer cheap and effective opportunity for reintegration and prevents clients from falling back to the social provision system.

**Justification:**
Legal regulations do not contain provisions about the problems that clients might face at the end of temporary care or how these problems could be avoided by experts and what services could respond to the emerged problems. Unfortunately some of the clients - 30% - “go round and round” under current system, wandering from one home to the other (it is confirmed by data of a nationwide survey made by HIA’s Methodology Centre).

When temporary care is over, some of the results achieved by institutions are lost within a few months and clients get into almost the same situation as they had been before temporary care. Principle of gradualness should be applied to avoid it. According to it the assisting activity should withdraw from the client’s life gradually, cut to his needs, gained abilities and skills. It could, however, be realised only if the halfway system is introduced among institutions of temporary care.
Providing educational support for children in need

Background:
Hungarian Interchurch Aid experiences it more and more often in its institutions that crisis emerged in lives of families prevents the child from school attendance. In most cases families do their best to educate their children in the right way but they do not have the necessary funds to get their children to school. The irregular school and kindergarten attendance caused by material difficulties will have negative effects on lives of children: irregularity might become a pattern in the family and might lead to isolation of children in the long run.

Proposal:
HIA proposes that certain groups should get material contribution to travel costs (monthly tickets) based on the level of needs in order that regular school attendance could be ensured.

Justification:
According to the organisation’s opinion children’s and youngster’s right to education suffers damage if school attendance may be realised only with big difficulties and children are unable to appear in the educational institution because the family has no money. The question of equal access to education comes up in these cases. Aren’t these children disadvantaged if they have to make tremendous efforts to get to the educational institution?

Access to education is a fundamental right of each child and violating these rights causes long-term handicaps whose treatment is a much bigger burden on the state then preventing the problem.

School social work

Background:
Hungarian Interchurch Aid launched its school social work program as a pilot initiative within its project “You’re not alone”. Services include individual case treatment, information counselling, psychological and legal counselling, social work with families, working in groups, services to support professional work (teachers). Schools involved in the program requested HIA’s help in several cases. Group sessions organised for children in different topics (conflicts, aggression and relationships) are very popular, just like psychological counselling, social counselling and training for teachers.

HIA, as an independent external organisation is able to provide effective assistance in the linkage system of teachers, students and parents. HIA’s staff members often experience that mistaken roles (the teacher is also a helper) are quite frequent in the process of solving existing problems at schools and competence boundaries are regularly stepped over. Externally operating institutional systems (family assistance centres and child welfare services) are unable to perform preventive tasks and they intervene only in serious cases in a corrective way due to their overloadedness.

Proposal:
Hungarian Interchurch Aid proposes that frames of school social work should be determined by law stipulating content of professional staff, system of services to be provided, financing of services and compulsory independence from the educational institution.

Justification:
According to the Office of the Commissioner for Educational Rights “schools need paid social workers who have no any dependence from school management and receive their wages not from the maintainer if possible. They do not teach at the school thus meet students exclusively in communication situations that lack any subservience. Tasks of school social worker include both prevention and communication. These workers maintain contacts with civil agencies (also with the police, the guardian’s office and child protection institutions if necessary) and through their work they also get in touch with the family environment which serves as the student’s background.”