

Children in Russia



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The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted in 1990. All Sida's support shall be permeated by consideration of the needs of children and ensure that children's rights are guaranteed.



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Effective social services for children and families

If children are to grow up in favourable and secure conditions in their homes, it is important that poor and needy families, parents and relatives of the children can obtain the help they need from society. Social development work taking place in the home requires different attitudes and approaches. Out-of-date routines

and attitudes often stand in the way of the reforms and new methods that would benefit the most needy.

Sida is therefore supporting the development of effective and efficient social support services in Russia. This involves providing training and further education for social workers and administrators in modern social work, where the focus is on the needs of the individual, in particular the child. Over 2,000 social workers, mainly from St Petersburg, Moscow, Arkhangelsk, Murmansk, Karelia, Kaluga, Pskov, Kaliningrad and the Leningrad region have participated in courses and training programmes in social work. With the aid of the training programmes and study visits in Sweden, social workers have been able to obtain inspiration and ideas for the development of new working methods that will enable them to give quality support to parents, not least single mothers, so that their children can grow up in an acceptable and affectionate environment.

In *Kaluga* support is being given for instruction in methods and for training in issues relating to children and families for the staff working at a centre providing support for families.

The social authorities in *Pskov* are providing further education programmes for social workers throughout the region and have opened a training centre in the town of Velikij Luki.

In *Arkhangelsk* and *Karelia*, the university education for social workers is further strengthened and improved.

Street children

The growing economic and social problems in Russian society is reflected in the growing problems of many families. Some children run away from difficult conditions at home, in order to get away from parents that abuse alcohol and drugs, from maltreatment and sexual violations. In some cases, the parents have abandoned their children or are in prison. For various reasons the children end up on the streets, where crime, drug abuse and prostitution offers a form of escape.

In *Moscow* Sida is supporting a project at a children's transit home, a so-called "priyot", where children stay temporarily for up to one year. The idea of the project is to train personnel to make an inventory of the human resources which can be found close to families with problems and to activate these resources in various ways. It is primarily a question of relatives

and friends, but can also include authorities that are drawn into the families' problems and which can contribute, in different ways, to reuniting children with their family and relatives.

In *St Petersburg*, Sida is supporting a training project which has the objective of developing the skills of personnel responsible for children 0–7 years old at a social support centre. Among other things, training and instruction is given in the development of methods for making interventions in families which are unable to take care of their children, and the development of methods for identifying children in the risk zone at an early stage.

In *Karelia* personnel at a children's transit home are being trained in working with children who have been abandoned by their parents.

In *St Petersburg* Sida funds are making it possible for social workers to be stationed in courts to make case studies of children and young people who have committed crimes. The aim is to find alternatives to sending juveniles to prisons for adults.

Disabled children

In the former Soviet Union functional disabilities and mental retardation were regarded as incurable conditions. Even today, many children suffering from minimal functional or mental disabilities are still being

separated from their parents and put in different types of medical institutions where they are kept for the rest of their lives without any opportunity for treatment and rehabilitation. It is urgent that authorities and organizations for the disabled can offer advice and support to parents of children with disabilities.

In *Arkhangelsk* Sida is supporting a rehabilitation project for children with functional and mental disabilities. The children are given special treatment in their natural family environment, in cooperation with their parents, and some are given the opportunity to go to a regular school.

In *St Petersburg* Sida is providing support for methods development to the Early Intervention Institute which works with improving the care of children in the ages of 0–4 years who have psycho-social and functional disabilities. The Institute works with bringing out and developing the abilities of the children. This takes place in



Early Intervention Institute in St Petersburg



Children in a foster family in Pskov.

very close interplay with the parents, at an early stage in the children's life. The objective is to make it possible for families to keep their children and thereby avoid placing them in an institution. The Institute also trains personnel in Novgorod, Kaliningrad and Belarus. The Institute has recently been designated as a national model institution for preventive work with disabled children in Russia.

In *St Petersburg* mentally disabled youth are given practical training in how to cook and serve food in an institutional household. In the long term the household will be developed into a lunch restaurant with catering activities.

In *Kaliningrad* Sida is financing the further education of medical and care personnel in methods for the diagnosis and rehabilitation of children with different forms of functional and mental disabilities.

In *Murmansk* support is given to a project in which functionally disabled children learn to communicate with alternative means.

Children in institutions

According to official estimates, over 600,000 Russian children live in children's homes and various types of institutions. Only two to three per cent of the children in institutions are orphans, but most of them have little or no contact with their parents or close relatives. The negative consequences of institutional care on children are well documented. The lack of stimulation and contact with adults and the feeling of being abandoned often leads to late development and a lack of empathy and trust in other people. Many children who have lived in institutions end up with social difficulties after they have left the institution.

In *Kaliningrad* Sida provides support for preventive measures for young mothers who are drug addicts and infected with HIV. Their children are automatically sent to special children's homes. The idea of the project is to train personnel and health administrators in preventing the transmission of HIV to the children, as well as to reach addicted mothers and to find alternative care for the newly born children.

Within the framework of a training project for 160 social workers in the *Leningrad region*, personnel from different children's homes and institutions have been given training in modern social work.



Russia is one of Sweden's neighbours and an important partner in most fields, both bilaterally and regionally. Swedish development cooperation with Russia gives priority to support for reforms and to Russia's integration in Europe.

Swedish-Russian development cooperation mainly focuses on north-west Russia: the cities of St Petersburg, Archangelsk, Murmansk, Pskov, Novgorod and Kaliningrad and their surrounding regions, and the Karelian Republic.

To a large extent, support is coordinated with other international and bilateral donors, such as the World Bank, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and the EU development programme, Tacis.

The overall objectives of Swedish development cooperation are to:

- promote common security
- deepen the culture of democracy
- support socially sustainable economic transition
- support environmentally sustainable development.

Sida's development cooperation is based on strengthening local capacity through the transfer of Swedish know-how and experience that the Russian partner adapts to its own needs.



SWEDISH INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION AGENCY
SE-105 25 Stockholm, Sweden
Tel: +46 (0)8-698 50 00. Fax: +46 (0)8-20 88 64
Homepage: <http://www.sida.se>