

Holt International Children's Services

Child Welfare in Romania Project

USAID Co-operative Agreement 186-0016-A-00-8112-00
October 1998 - September 2002

July - September, 2000
Project Quarter 8

I. Executive Summary

This quarter activities continued to focus on further developing and improving community services as part of the project, maximise the programs' impact in the communities we serve, prepare for the mid term evaluation of the project.

We continued all "Child Welfare in Romania Project" - program components in Constanta and Iasi: **Crisis Intervention Services for At-risk Families and Children** (with three components: *Pregnancy Counselling, Community Based Services to Families At-Risk, and Services to Abandoned Children*), **Domestic Adoption Services, Foster Care Services and Services to HIV+ Children and Their Families.**

Almost all quarterly project objectives have been reached and for some of them we are over our set objectives (see chapter II - Data).

Social assistants in all sites continued this quarter to assist abandoned children in maternities, pediatric hospitals and dystrophic units, as well as serving children and families at risk within communities. They continued to provide economic assistance to families through donations of material goods and information on family planning methods and referral to local family planning clinics.

Holt continued the work on the three guides/ manuals: a guide for young mothers, a guide for social assistants offering pregnancy counselling services and a guide for the professionals working with HIV/AIDS affected children and their families. The three guides will be finalised by the end of year 2000 and they are objectives in the USAID funded project "Child Welfare in Romania".

Holt continued the efforts at the national level for developing domestic adoption in Romania - through offering technical assistance in the National Training Program in Domestic Adoption (partnership with UNICEF and the National Agency) and through active participation in a National Task Force for developing minimal standards for adoption services in Romania (USAID\ World Learning initiative).

Holt participated in several meetings for **the preparation and implementation of the mid term evaluation of the USAID project.** The team of evaluators includes 4 members: 2 evaluators from USA (Fred Wulczyn and Britany Orlebeke) and 2 Romanian evaluators (George Poede from University of Iasi and Laura Balanuca from the National Agency). The team of evaluators together with representatives of the 3 implementing organisations (Holt, World Vision and Bethany) did a field visit to Iasi site (June 28th - July 1st). The second part of the evaluation took place during the month of August 2 - 10. Participation in this project evaluation meant a lot of work and a team effort. The evaluators needed a lot of information regarding program implementation, financial data, data base information. The evaluation report will be ready and submitted to USAID during the month of October.

Training:

Holt continued the National Training in Domestic Adoption project (partnership with UNICEF). The training session for Region # 2 took place in Mures county, July 17 - 21, and included the counties of Mures, Covasna, Harghita and Brasov. Region # 3 (counties of Bacau, Neamt, Vrancea and Galati) took place in Bacau, September 4 - 8.

This training is offered to representatives of the local Directorates for the Protection of Children and local Commissions for Child Protection.

This is a non USAID funded project.

Holt continued to actively participate in the Task Force on professional Standards in Adoption - organized by World Learning. Regional Conferences on adoption services and professional standards are scheduled for the last quarter of this year. Holt is involved in organizing and moderating the regional conferences.

New staff hired in Iasi (3 staff) and our new case supervisor in Iasi received internal training in Iasi, Constanta and Bucharest.

During this quarter, Holt offered training for a total of 6 new foster care families as part of their training to become maternal assistants. This is one way Holt offers support to local DPCs to help them develop local networks of trained maternal assistants.

Important meetings - with significance for the project:

Holt participated in USAID meetings: SO meeting (July 27), PRO CHILD group meetings (July, August).

Holt participated in the midterm evaluation - for the evaluation of the USAID project, August 2 - 11th.

Holt had several meetings with representatives from World Bank, EU, OMAS - interested in child welfare issues and the way Romanian authorities work with NGOs active in child welfare programs/ activities.

Holt participated in a meeting with Senator Landrieu (July 7). Mrs. Landrieu was interested to meet with the PRO CHILD group and learn about the work done by American PVOs in Romania.

Holt participated at the "FAR 2000" (the National Fair of the Romanian Associations and Foundations"- third edition), organized by FDSC and scheduled for September 15 - 17, in Bucharest.

II. Data

All project components developed by Holt are implemented in direct collaboration with the local DCPs in the counties of **Constanta and Iasi**.

IASI

1. Crisis Intervention Services for At-risk Families and Children

There are six (6) social assistants in the Crisis Intervention program in Iasi county:

One social assistant is located in the maternity hospital of Iasi and works with pregnant women at risk, women after delivery, children at risk of being abandoned and abandoned children in the maternity ward.

Two social assistants are working out of two local health dispensaries in Iasi city and offer services to pregnant women, families and children at risk from those communities.

One social assistant is located in the Dystrophic Unit in Iasi and offers services for the children from the Dystrophic Unit (the great majority of them being abandoned) and for children abandoned in the paediatric ward of the Iasi hospital.

We have two new positions in this program in Iasi (approved by USAID) starting with September 1st: The social assistants are working in placement centers doing child evaluation for the children who are long term institutionalised and developing permanency plans for these children.

This quarter:

A number of 92 new children (new cases for this quarter) received services under the Crisis Intervention Program developed by Holt in Iasi, of which 11 were abandoned children (in institutions and medical facilities), and 81 were identified as at-risk for abandonment.

A total number 341 children (all cases served) received services under the Crisis Intervention program during the quarter.

A number of 101 at risk children - receiving services through the Crisis Intervention program remained with their families and 4 abandoned children returned to their birth families as a result of services received.

A. Pregnancy Counselling Component

31 new women (new cases for this quarter) in crisis were served through the pregnancy counselling component. Of this number 4 were pregnant and 27 had already delivered.

A total number of 131 women (all cases served) received services through this program during the quarter.

25 new women received information on and referral to family planning clinics.

A number of 33 new children also received services as part of the Pregnancy Counselling component (children of women in the Pregnancy Counselling program).

B. Community Based Services to Families At-Risk Component

48 new children received services as part of the community based services to families at-risk program during this quarter in Iasi.

26 new families (new cases) were registered and received services under this program component.

A total number of 82 families (all cases served) received services through this program during the quarter.

C. Services to Abandoned Children Component

11 new abandoned children received services through this program component.

2. Domestic Adoption Services

We have one social assistant working for this program in Iasi. She is located in Holt office but her work is done in strong collaboration with colleagues from the local DCPs. The quarterly objective for this program for Iasi was to have 6 new placements in domestic adoption.

This quarter, 5 new children were placed in domestic adoption in Iasi.

22 children received follow up services (post placement services) during the quarter.

5 new adoptive families were recruited.

A total of 27 adoptive families received services during the quarter.

3. Foster Care Services

Holt has 1 social assistant specialised in foster care in Iasi site.

We continue to focus on short term foster care not only for de-institutionalising children from institutions but also as a preventive service.

The quarterly objective for this program for Iasi was to have 5 new placements in foster care, for a total of 15 children placed in our Iasi foster care network.

This quarter: 7 new children were placed in foster care in Iasi site.

At the end of the quarter a total of 12 children were in care in this site.

33 new families were recruited to become foster families. Holt works with a number of 16 officially accredited (certified) maternal assistants in Iasi, at the end of this quarter.

4. Services to HIV+ Children and Their Families

Holt has 1 social assistant specialised in offering services to HIV/AIDS children and their families in Iasi site. She is located in the Hospital for Infectious Diseases of Iasi county, where Holt opened a social assistance office. Services offered are focused on counselling and family support, preventing the institutionalisation of the HIV+ children, keeping the families united, community and school integration. Our social assistant works in collaboration with medical staff working in the county hospital for infectious diseases and in the local ministry of health.

Holt developed a reintegration program with temporary financial support of the family, in both sites. In Iasi there are 15 children with HIV/AIDS who benefit from this program at the end of this quarter. All of these children are in their birth families and they are visited several times a month by the social assistant. All of them receive, economical support consisting in food, clothes, shoes, vitamins, medicine, school supplies. Intense counselling, moral support and other social services are also provided to these families.

The quarterly objective for this program for Iasi was to serve 9 new cases (children with HIV/AIDS).

This quarter 9 new cases of HIV+ children were opened in Iasi site.

A total number of 61 children with HIV/AIDS (all cases served) received services during this quarter.

The quarter ended with 51 active cases.

There are 15 children with HIV/AIDS in the reintegration program with temporary financial support of the family.

CONSTANTA

1. Crisis Intervention Services for At-risk Families and Children

We have four (4) social assistants working for the Crisis Intervention program in Constanta county: 3 of them are placed in Constanta city and cover the city of Constanta and large areas/ communities in the whole county; one social assistant is located in Medgidia and works out of Holt's Community Resource Center in Medgidia.

This quarter:

A number of 94 new children (new cases for this quarter) received services under the Crisis Intervention Program developed by Holt in Constanta, of which 4 were abandoned children (in institutions and medical facilities), and 90 were identified as at-risk for abandonment.

A total number of 305 children (all cases served) received services under the Crisis Intervention program during the quarter.

A number of 93 at risk children - receiving services through the Crisis Intervention program remained with their families and 3 abandoned children returned to their birth families as a result of services received).

A. Pregnancy Counselling Component

59 new women (new cases for this quarter) in crisis were served through the pregnancy counselling component. Of this number 7 were pregnant and 52 had already delivered.

A total number of 173 women (all cases served) received services through this program during the quarter.

57 new women received information on and referral to family planning clinics.

A number of 61 children also received services as part of the Pregnancy Counselling component (children of women in the Pregnancy Counselling program).

B. Community Based Services to Families At-Risk Component

29 new children received services as part of the community based services to families at-risk program during this quarter in Constanta.

26 new families (new cases) were registered and received services under this program component.

A total number of 88 families (all cases served) received services through this program during the quarter.

C. Services to Abandoned Children Component

4 new abandoned children received services through this program component.

2. Domestic Adoption Services

We have one social assistants working for this program in Constanta. She is located in Holt office but her work is done in strong collaboration with colleagues from the local DCP.

The quarterly objective for this program for Constanta was to have 6 new placements in domestic adoption.

*This quarter, 6 new children were placed in domestic adoption in Constanta.
16 children received follow up services (post placement services) during the quarter.*

*6 new adoptive families were recruited.
A total of 19 adoptive families received services during the quarter.*

3. Foster Care Services

Holt has 2 social assistants specialised in foster care in Constanta site. One of them is placed in Constanta city, working out of Holt's office and the other one is placed in Medgidia, working out of the local Holt Community Resource Center.

We continue to focus on short term foster care not only for de-institutionalising children from institutions but also as a preventive service.

Holt also continues to develop in Constanta long term foster care for HIV+ children. Holt developed in Constanta a network of specialised foster care families for HIV+ children - trained and supported to offer long term specialised foster care services.

The quarterly objective for this program for Constanta was to have 10 new placements in foster care, for a total of 30 children placed in our Constanta foster care network.

*This quarter: 15 new children were placed in short term foster care in Constanta site.
At the end of the quarter a total of 30 children were in short term care in this site.
4 new families were recruited to become foster families.
Holt works with a total number of 23 officially accredited (certified) maternal assistants in Constanta, at the end of this quarter, of which 14 have been certified during this quarter.*

In addition, Holt has a total of 9 HIV/AIDS children placed in our long term therapeutic foster care network in Constanta county.

4. Services to HIV+ Children and Their Families

Holt has 3 social assistants specialised in offering services to HIV/AIDS children and their families in Constanta site. Two social assistants are located in Constanta city and are covering with services large areas in the whole county; the third social assistant is located in Medgidia and works out of the local Holt Community Resource Center.

Holt developed a reintegration program with temporary financial support of the family, in both sites. In Constanta there are 20 children with HIV/AIDS who benefit from this program at the end of this quarter. All of these children are in their birth families and they are visited several times a month by the social assistant. All of them receive, economical support consisting in food, clothes, shoes, vitamins, medicine, school supplies. Intense counselling, moral support and other social services are also provided to these families.

The quarterly objective for this program for Constanta was to serve 12 new cases (children with HIV/AIDS).

This quarter 8 new cases of HIV+ children were opened in Constanta site. A total number of 144 children with HIV/AIDS (all cases served) received services during this quarter.

The quarter ended with 135 active cases.

There are 20 children with HIV/AIDS in the reintegration program with temporary financial support of the family.

There is a total of 10 children with HIV/AIDS placed in long term foster care.

III. Successes and Barriers by County

Successes - Iasi

- increase in the number of the domestic adoption placements, based on an intensive recruitment campaign
- two new positions opened
- successful mid term evaluation
- very good partnership with local NGOs

Successes - Constanta

- improved collaboration with the local DCP
- project objectives for the quarter - reached for almost all program components and exceeded for some program components
- successful midterm evaluation

Barriers - Iasi and Constanta

- very unstable political environment, important political changes, instability of staff working at the local of local authority, local institutions
- issues linked with corruption regarding international adoption that have an influence over any programs/ projects in the area of child welfare.
- personality issues in Iasi - with the director of the Iasi DPC and her pro-institutionalisation of children attitude
- A huge challenge continues to be the very poor economical status of the majority of our clients - especially in crisis intervention program and the program for HIV affected families.

IV. Information regarding “System Change” component

Holt staff continued the efforts to develop three manuals this year:

1. Hand book for inexperienced mothers - “How to take good care of your baby”
2. Pregnancy Counselling manual for practitioners
3. Handbook for practitioners on HIV/AIDS issues

All these materials will be widely distributed to local DCPs, in order to help improve quality of services offered by professionals.

Holt is implementing a National Training Program in Domestic Adoption, in partnership with UNICEF and the National Agency for the Protection of the Rights of the Children. The training is offered to staff working in local DCPs and to members of the local Commission for Child Protection in each county. This is an 18 months project and will cover the entire country.

Also as part of our strategy and efforts to encourage domestic adoption in Romania and to improve the quality of adoption services in this country, Holt continued to actively participate in the meetings of the National Task Force on Adoption (organised by USAID\ World Learning).

Holt continues to be part of the National Federation of the NGOs active in Child Welfare in Romania, and support the efforts of this Federation to build a strong voice for children and for children’s rights.

V. Narrative stories

See case stories (attachments)

VI. Report from the County Council Secretary and the National Agency regarding the progress of the project

VII. Achieved goals this quarter and anticipated outputs for the next quarter

Please see Chapter II Data

VIII. Financial report

See attachment

IX. Annual report of capital goods

X. Attachments

- Financial Report
- Case Stories with Photographs

Added chapter to the HOLT Quarterly report:

XI. Other services to children (all Holt Romania programs)

- This quarter a total of 290 new children were served by Holt in all of its programs, in the 4 sites (Constanta, Iasi, Bucharest, Mures)
- Holt ended the quarter with a total of 883 active cases of children and 254 active cases of women in crisis, in the 4 sites
- Over Holt's four active sites in Romania (Constanta, Iasi, Bucharest, Mures):
 - 38 new children were placed in foster care this quarter.
 - 99 children are placed and cared for in Holt foster care families, at the end of the quarter.
 - 49 new foster families were recruited.
 - 56 foster families are recognised as official maternal assistants.
 - 12 children were placed in Romanian adoptive families.
 - 113 new women in crisis were served through the crisis intervention program.
 - 100 new women received family planning information
 - 30 new children with HIV and their families were served.
 - 57 HIV+ children received help through the reintegration program with financial support of the family.
 - 12 HIV/AIDS children are placed in long term foster care.
 - 3 new women were placed in the shelter with 13 women with 13 children in the shelter program at the end of the quarter.
- Holt continues the implementation of a new program in Bucharest: **The Community resource Center**. This new program is being implemented in partnership with UNICEF and in collaboration with IOMC (Institute for Mother and Child Care).
- **Long term Foster care for older children/ sibling groups in Mures county:** We ended the quarter with 13 children placed in long term foster care: three groups of three siblings each and two groups of two siblings. They are placed in five foster families.
- Holt continued the National Training in Domestic Adoption project (partnership with UNICEF). The training session for Region # 2 took place in Mures county, July 17 - 21, and included the counties of Mures, Covasna, Harghita and Brasov. Region # 3 (counties of Bacau, Neamt, Vrancea and Galati) took place in Bacau, September 4 - 8.
- A work team of volunteers from US visited us during the month of July (July 2 - 10). Their visit was a result of a joint effort between HICS/ Eugene office and Holt Romania team. The purpose of the work team was to help arrange a play room for children hospitalised in the Hospital for Infectious Diseases in Iasi. The members of our Iasi team worked together with the American volunteer team. This effort and the result of their work was very much appreciated by the children in the hospital and by the medical staff.

- Holt Constanta organized a very special event for the children affected by HIV/AIDS, who are cared for in our long term therapeutically foster care network in Constanta site: a picnic on the Danube river, during the month of August. It was a great event, with great participation. All children in our HIV-FC participated (with the exception of 1 child who was away from Constanta at that date), all foster care parents and almost the whole Holt Constanta team - spent a wonderful vacation day by the river; lots of sun, fun, games, barbecue..., smiles and trust for the future.

Holt International Children's Services
Child Welfare in Romania Project

QUARTER 8 REPORT

HOLT INTERNATIONAL

QUARTERLY REPORT
JULY - SEPTEMBER, 2000

USAID chart

USAID IR indicators

		Cluj	Iasi	Constanta	Total
Number of children protected in State institutions		 	DATA FROM MAPCR -		SEE WV REPORT
Number of participants trained	Internal Staff *	 	4	0	4
	Government staff	 	SEE WV REPORT		
	NGOs	 	SEE WV REPORT		
Number of children served in community based services	USAID Activity	 	402	449	851
	County activity		DATA FROM MAPCR - SEE WV REPORT		
Number of families receiving services		 	300	419	719
Number of programs available	USAID activities	 	6	6	6

Number of new children admitted in institutions in Iasi, Cluj and Constanta	This quarter	 	DATA FROM MAPER - SEE WU REPORT		
	Cumulative, since USAID activity				
Number of children placed for adoption in Romanian adoptive families	By USAID activity	 	5	6	11
Number of rural communities/urban districts impacted by community development programs		 	—	—	—

* Define type of professionals trained

Number of professional meetings to develop procedures; number of new procedures agreed by all the professionals involved

USAID funded activities

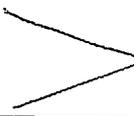
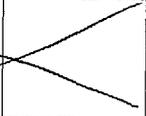
Case Activity by Services (*)

	SERVICES	Cluj		Iasi		Constanta		Totals		
		This Quarter	Cumulative	This Quarter	Cumulative	This Quarter	Cumulative	This Quarter	Cumulative	
Case Management and Family Support	Family Reunification: Number of children reunified with their families	 	 	4	53	3	28	7	81	
	Foster care:	Number of foster parents recruited,	 	 	33	131	4	91	37	222
		Number of foster parents trained	 	 	0		6		6	
		Number of foster parents certified by the county	 	 	0	16	14	27	14	43
		Number of children placed in foster care	 	 	7	29	15	84	22	113
	Domestic adoption	Number of families recruited	 	 	5	29	6	53	11	82

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		Number of families trained			5		6		11	
		Number approved by county			3	19	7	41	10	60
		Number of families receiving children.			5	24	6	41	11	65
		Number of children receiving post-placement services			21	22	16	41	37	63
	Home Based Counseling									
	Pregnancy Counseling (Holt's Program)	Number of women receiving counseling			31	221	59	525	90	746
		Number of women receiving family planning info and referrals			25	208	57	429	82	637
Services for Women in Transition (World Vision)	Number of cases (mother and child) served in Emergency Shelter (not prevented)									
	Day Care Services (Number children in day care)									

Services for Youth in Transition	Number of children served in Life Skills Programs								
HIV program	Number of HIV/AIDS children served (new cases)			9	69	8	221	17	290
	Total number of children served during the quarter			61		144		205	
	Family reintegration with economic support			15	45	20	81	35	126
	Therapeutic Foster Care (Total number at the end of the quarter)			0	0	9	10	9	10
Early Intervention and Prevention services	Number of cases receiving services.								
Crisis intervention services	Children abandoned in institutions (new cases)			11	126	4	44	15	170
	Number of families at risk served			82	229	88	310	170	539
Emergency Fund	Number of children benefiting			SEE WV REPORT					

	Number of families			SEE WV REPORT				
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(*) The indicators in this chart are defined as follows:

September,00

Ψ **A dream to fulfill** Ψ

Alina is a pretty little girl, healthy and very lovable. Surely her mom loves her more than anything. Unfortunately, her material situation was such that she couldn't offer her baby neither a proper home, nor a decent living.

The mother is of rrom ethnicity, and belongs to a family with 19 children. A few ears ago, because of some family misunderstandings, she left her home. Soon after, she remained pregnant, and, as nobody was there to care for her anymore, she had to beg to keep herself and the little being inside of her alive. But the events went from worse to worst: she was fined for doing what she did in order to survive; as she had obviously no money to pay it, the fine changed into contraventional custody and she was retained the ID.

These having passed, after a while she gave birth to a wonderful little girl. Nevertheless she couldn't share a mother's joy but for very short time, as her baby was entrusted to a placement center soon after birth. Then a professional maternal assistant took her under foster care, the child's permanency plan being family reintegration.

Alina's mother visited her as often as she could, waiting eagerly the meetings with her girl. Meanwhile, she looked for a place to live (but didn't find any), as well as job, so as she might be able to take care of her child properly.

I've taken some pictures of the mother together with her little girl. The former delivered it to the maternal grandmother together with a letter in which she wrote about her having a baby, whom she loves very much. As a response to the letter she had received, the grandmother let her know (through a village neighbor who came to Constanta) that she agrees to her coming back home. The news of a possible reconciliation after two years' absence, make

Alina's mother quite happy and more optimistic as regarding her future together with her baby. She confessed to me, almost in tears, that she missed her family a lot and barely waits to speak with her mother again. I talked on the phone myself with the grandmother and I was pleased to find out that the news of having a granddaughter had touched something in her sole and was willing to let the passed behind.

Now the mother's biggest wish is to finally return home with her little girl. I've seen that her fine be paid and that she get back her ID sooner. Presently we pay every effort to help Alina's mother finally see her wish become a reality...

Holt Social Assistant: **Cristina Muresanu**



Translated from Romanian

HOLT INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S SERVICES - IASI CENTER
CRISIS INTERVENTION PROGRAM
CASE STORY: September
SOCIAL ASSISTANT: Cristina Vamesu

“ **HOPE**

..

I was born in the winter of 1999, several days before Christmas Holiday. My coming into this life wasn't one of the happiest... My mother, in fact a child herself, got scared when she found out that somewhere, inside her, there another tiny heart beating, and tried to hide my existence. I wished I could speak to her, tell her I'd be a little girl, with brown eyes, that I was going to love flowers and puppies. But my voice wasn't strong enough to cover the distance which separated us.

I thought that maybe, if she saw me, all her fears would go away... I wanted a lot to be able to snuggle myself against her breast, and the desire to meet her was becoming more and more powerful. So I decided that the meeting I was waiting for should happen quicker.

As soon as I saw her I wanted to be able to tell her how beautiful she was, I wanted her to tell me she loved me... Nothing of all this happened. On the contrary: one day my mother left and I haven't seen her since. Fear came over me, I weeped, but my crying for help got no answer... A lot of people in white robes were moving around me, looking worried at me and saying I was too small and sick... So I remained in the hospital.

Three months ago I received the visit of some very nice people and since then I feel God has turned His face towards me... The first meeting excited me so much that my reaction wasn't the one I wanted. But they were patient with me, held me and promised me they'd come to take me home.

Home !? Will I have a home ? I didn't understand quite well what would happen to me, but I trusted my chance. Every time they came to see me my hopes were present again. Until one day my dreams came true: they have taken me HOME !

Now there are two persons who love me: MOTHER and FATHER. I am happy !



HOLT INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S SERVICES – IASI CENTER
DOMESTIC ADOPTION PROGRAM
CASE STORY – MONTH OF AUGUST
SOCIAL ASSISTANT – DANIELA STAN

After two years

The month of May is the time when nature comes back to life, when flower blossom and trees are covered with green leaves. This is the month when I was born. My name is Adriana and my story is sad but with a happy end.

I came on this world with a weak cry and doctors were surprised to see me so fragile and small. They admitted me to the Premature Infants Unit of Sf Maria Hospital from Iasi and then I was transferred to the Nutrition Therapy Unit of the same Hospital. I am a fighter child; therefore in just few months I amazed all the doctors because I became a healthy and normal developed little girl. The doctors were pleased of my evolution.

Then, I realized that other children near me were going home and I heard for the first time the word “mama”. I was cared for by the hospital nurses, especially two of them were caring for me. I loved them and I told them “mama”. A nice and gentle lady accompanied by a strong man but with a soft voice came to see me after one year and a half. I smiled to them and played with them because I have been a friendly child. They come again and went together for a walk.

Someday I realized that something was going to happen, “my mothers” from the hospital held me in their arms and talked with me and they had tears in their eyes. Those two people came and to be honest, I liked them; they dressed me nicely and we went from the hospital. Then I realized that it was for good.

I went by car and I sat in that nice lady’s lap, and she was caressing me and talking very gently with me.

Now, I have a big family and I do know what is the meaning of the word “mother” and I learned the word “daddy”, too. I have four brothers and two sisters who love me and care for me.

When I turned two, I had my first birthday cake and I felt happy. I also felt that I would be happy all of my life because I am now safe and loved.



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The story of the month "Fate"

August, 00

Her name is Catalina. She opened eyes upon the world at a time seasons reach crossroads, hesitating between the warmth of a lively summer and the icy majesty of winter. Over the dying flowers it poured with leaves like golden tears. An autumn day nobody read, back then, as foreshadowing the child's tragic destiny. Cause nobody knew. Or imagined.

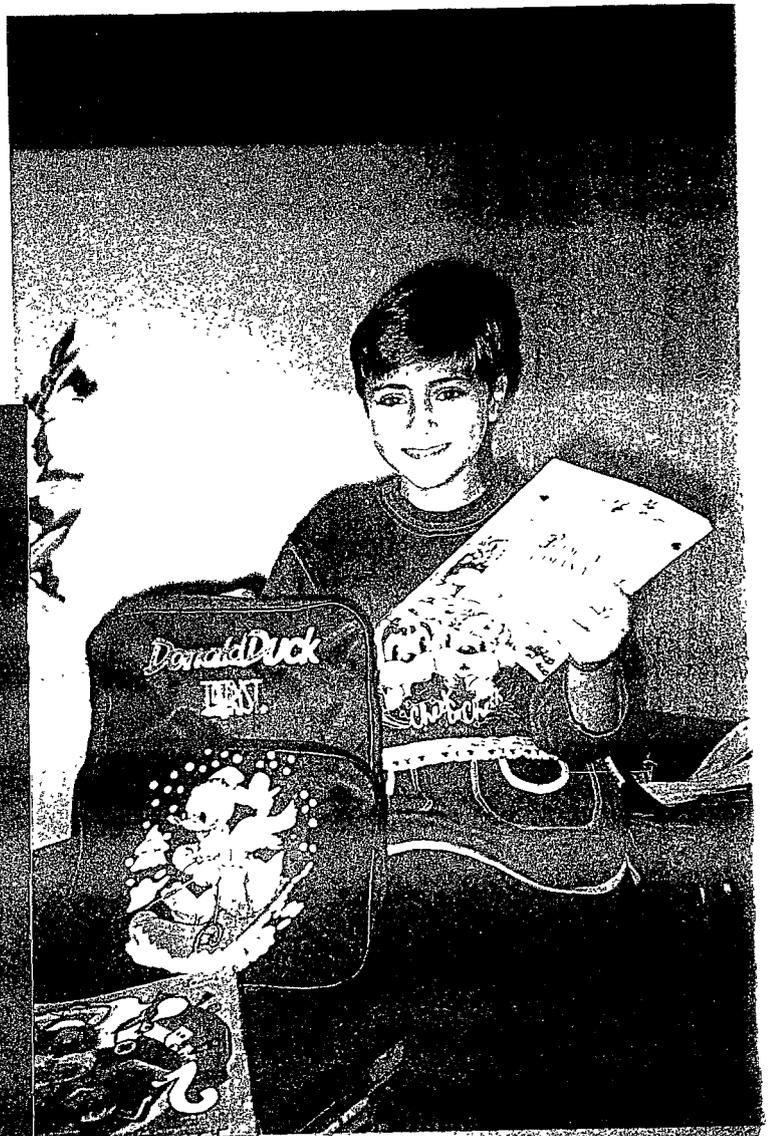
Three months after the little girl had been born, her life suddenly changed course, entering a dark corner. First, her father abandoned her. His leave caused her mother, too young a woman to bear the burden of such a separation, to suffer a nervous breakdown. Subsequently, she was no longer able to take care of her child, and three years later, chose to fight no more against despondency and enter the territories of eternal darkness. Down there tis no joy, nor misery...

The little girl would have remained all alone to survive in a harsh world but for her aunt, who took her under care even during the time her mother was alive. Once the latter died, she promised, on the behalf of her beloved sister, to love and cherish the poor innocent child left behind.

Unfortunately, that was not the end of fate's bitter turns. Her soul already hardened by the recent death of her sister, the child's new mother had to confront an unexpected obstacle. She was obliged to make the most painful choice of her life, that is, between her husband and her little niece. Torn in two, she accepted the price: she was to give up all personal life because she couldn't give up on her, the little innocent kid. The light and joy this girl will bring into my life are going to be a greater reward, she said to herself.

Time passed, and the child reached the age of 7. She had that kind of smile which opens soul gates, pure and bright like a flower's bloom. Everything was perfect between the two, as if they were one flesh and blood. That is why, when fate stroke once again, the wound it opened was deep and painful. As a result of some medical tests, they discovered she was infected with AIDS virus. A destiny's last irony: a mother who chooses not to live, and her child, condemned not to...

Holt social assistant: Turiceanu Loredana



**HOLT INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S SERVICES – IASI CENTER
CRISIS INTERVENTION PROGRAM
SOCIAL ASSISTANT – CRISTINA VAMESU**

CASE STORY – “THE SAD STEFANEL”

He is THE SAD STEFANEL

He has blonde hair, beautiful big and melancholic blue eyes. Sad and wonderful and beautiful as an angel, he babbles softly whenever he looks at someone. He is so frail and has long fingers like an artist and his hands are eager to play holding out as if he would call you to come near his crib and talk to him. He looks amazed at you, wishing to tell you how sad he is when he is left alone. He squeezes strongly the index finger that you point to him and he would never let it go. He is very happy when you hold him with your arms standing close to your breast and his little heart beats quickly and his chin trembling often due to an innocent crying in the unfriendly environment of the hospital room. He has already learned that anyone would wipe his tears or comfort him by rocking him. We don't know and when this unwanted and uncalled soul came into this world being meant to pain and endless sorrow. He lives and enjoys the few moments of happiness and warmth that one gives to him. He doesn't ask for anything that he knows he doesn't deserve. For him, happiness means just a smile, a word and once in a while a protective hug. Alone in a cold and unfriendly world where days slowly pass by, he waits for a miracle.

He was born on a freezing winter day of 1999 and he was immediately abandoned at the entrance of a block of flats. His first home was a box. A stray dog was the first soul that stayed close to him and warmed him in that cold day. The child and the dog were rescued and admitted into the Sf Maria's Children Hospital.

The wonder for him – nobody's child that never had the joy of parental love nor compassion – is a MOTHER. BUT WHO IS SHE GOING TO BE?

