

Oslo Sporveier Arbeiderforening
Økernveien 9
0653 Oslo
Norway



26 June 2017

Update on: SOS Children's Village Kandalaksha

Dear Friends at Oslo Sporveier Arbeiderforening,



We always have a bright sky above us

It's been some time since we came in contact last time, did you miss us? All this time I was looking forward to sharing some news with you! So, here we go now!

FAMILY FOR EVERY CHILD

I would like to start with some serious stuff and tell you about big changes taking place in child welfare system in Russia. Sounds a bit boring, doesn't it? But be patient it's worth reading. The thing is that a few years ago the approach to caring for orphaned children in Russia was significantly revised.

Today the state policy gives family-based care priority over institutional care. In simple words this means that today children without parental care are placed in another family

rather than in orphanage. The phrase 'a child should be cared for in a family setting' has become official state position. Here's where it gets interesting. In practice this change has led to the immense development of foster care in Russia. Many state orphanages have been closed eventually as no longer needed. A good example of this is the closure of 7 orphanages in Murmansk region over the past five years. All the children who used to live there found homes in foster families. I'm proud to say that SOS Organization has played an important role in this positive process. Since 1996 we have been promoting family type of care at all levels as the best form of a child's placement.

Your commitment and your trust in us made our vision – 'every child belongs to a family' – a reality. Just think about it. Altogether we managed to change children's policy for the better in such a big country as Russia. Isn't that breathtaking?!

HOME FOR EVERY FAMILY

So now you know that many people in Russia are willing to become foster parents. Like many years before SOS Russia cherish this positive process and keeps developing foster forms of care. As an important contribution we launched a foster family programme in 2014. The idea of the programme is simple: any foster family can live in a free house in the village and get psychological, pedagogical and medical support from SOS Organization.



Dreams about a big family come true!

Three years ago first foster family came in SOS Children's Village Kandalaksha. Nowadays there are already 5 foster families with 23 children in total living in the village. 'To me it looks very much like a cooperation or symbiosis: we - foster families - care for children and SOS Children's Village cares for us,' – tells Jana, foster mother. 'Anyway we all have the same goal – giving children a loving home. So why not to cooperate?' Jana and her husband Eugenij became foster parents in 2012 when they welcomed three neglected children in their family. Four years later a lovely boy joined them.

In 2016 a whole big family moved in SOS Children's Village. 'Though we had two our own children we always dreamed about bigger family. This is how it's all got started,' – tells Jana. 'In the village we found better conditions than anywhere else. I don't mean only house which is nice but in the first place warm attitude and the best support that we could ever have. I'm thankful to all the good people in the village. They have become a part of our family too. This is basically how we live here – like one big family.'

STEP BY STEP

Do you remember the moment when you left your parents and started to live independently? Was it tough for you or maybe you quickly got settled? As the children in SOS Children's Village grow bigger we look at ways to encourage independence in them. Last year we started an educational programme for teenagers and older children 'Step by Step'. The aim of it is to



Step by step confidently

give the teenagers knowledge and skills needed for independent living. 'While some teenagers are craving freedom from a young age, others need a little push to become confident and self-motivated,' – tells Victor, pedagogue and leader of the programme. 'Paying bills, reading electricity and water meters, dealing with public authorities ... things like these may seem trifle for an adult. For a young man, however, they can become an obstacle.' Every Saturday twelve teenagers gather in the village hall for a lesson within 'Step by Step' programme. The topic is new each time. 'Let's say you are adult and your monthly income is 25 000 roubles. How would you spend it?' – Victor begins the

lesson. Last time they learned to make household budgets. 'I'm not going to spend any money... I'm going to save up instead,' – Ivan replies smiling. Everyone starts laughing. So you see it's not only useful but so much fun as well.

As a part of the programme the teenagers also visit different organizations to see with their own eyes professionals at work and get the taste of different jobs. In Employment Center they learned how to find a job and to write a CV correctly. Meeting with the traffic police inspector did not leave any doubt that it is absolutely necessary to follow traffic rules. Visit to a Bread Factory was probably the most 'delicious' so far. 'We could try everything. Bread was fresh and hot, and it melted in our mouth...' – 13-year-old Maxim was curiously watching people working there, admiring machines that made dough and huge ovens. 'Step by Step' programme is still ongoing and many more interesting lessons and discoveries await teenagers ahead.

It has been my pleasure once again to tell about the latest happenings in SOS Children's Village Kandalaksha. And once again I can't thank you enough for being our precious friend. We all draw our inspiration from you because you make a big deal - you make this world a friendlier place for the children who need it most!

Yours sincerely, 
Elena Plotnikova
National Sponsorship Co-ordinator