

Dear Guild Friends,

April 2008

Thanks to you, East European women improve conditions for people in great need. As the Lydia Board wants Guild funds to be used responsibly, we have considered projects according to our guidelines, checking that they are: realistic, accountable, and potential models for others in the region.

We requested Guild funding for "yeast money", to launch new work, creating models and encouraging similar support from more people. The first results are fine examples of the use of modest funds by women who give their free time and energy as volunteers, while working to support the dependents, pensioners and unemployed in their families.

The first urgent projects realised with your support concerned "Children on the Edge", vulnerable children without family or social support systems - who could fall into uncared for danger. **"Children on the Edge"** continues to help abandoned, gypsy and orphan children in Ukraine, Romania and Russia, as well as Georgia.

The summer camp for street children and poor families took place by the Black Sea in Batumi, Georgia. Leaders reported that the children benefited enormously from their first educational holiday by the sea, with the attention and care of a team of adults. They sent detailed budgets and accounts, excellent examples of working to find the best budget, and being very accountable for money given. This is a model for future projects.

Andrea from Transylvania was very moved to know that people across the seas care for her poor and gypsy village children, helping them to attend school, since they are too poor to manage without help.

Future plans were advanced in Kiev for work to be launched in 2008. Programmes were improved for work with the elderly, trafficked children and the many new organisations needing volunteers to make them detailed, realistic and concrete.

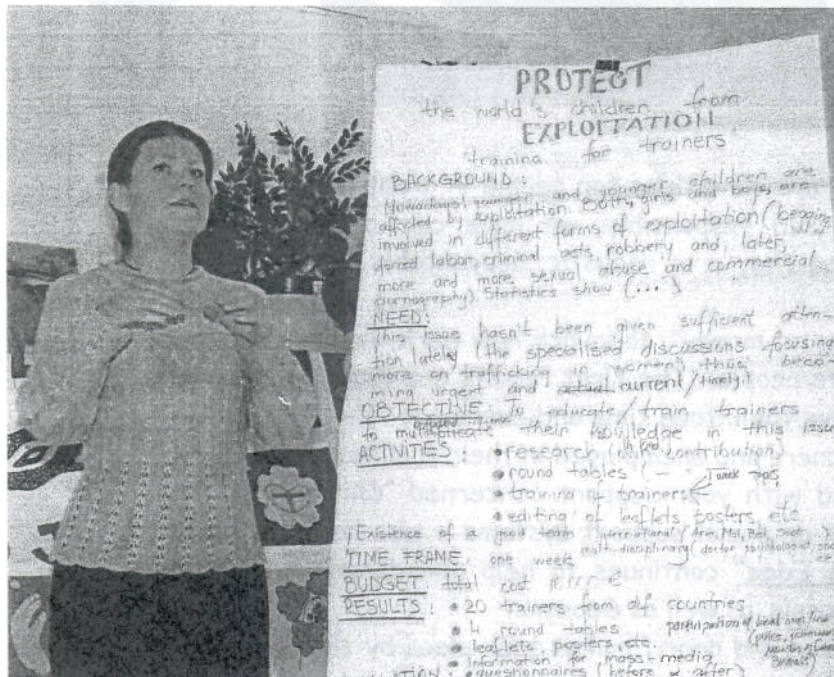
News reports of trafficked children or child slaves in Britain have been noticeable in recent months. Too many extremely poor East European children are enticed away from home to be used for begging or other forms of sexual exploitation and abuse. In a context of collapsed regimes and deprivation, in families without work, vulnerable young people are tempted by promises of shelter and food. Therefore, a number of Lydia Project women work to prevent such exploitation.

Their new joint programme, which begins with Guild support in summer 2008, is organised by Moldovan, Belarus and Armenian women. It is **"Children - not for sale!"** and works against the exploitation of younger and younger children. They plan to train those in positions capable of recognising danger: police, social workers, clergy or church workers and teachers. The first Romanian seminar will increase the potential for protection and prevention and will be preceded by local roundtables and research.

Another project launched with Guild funds is **"Never Too Late to Learn"**, a new collaboration to empower senior citizens. They may be the majority in their communities, but they survive with shrunken pensions in humiliating circumstances, and they can be very isolated. The organisers invite a lively facilitator from North Berwick, as she has launched excellent programmes with pensioners, starting from one modest beginning. They will learn how programmes are organised in a day centre - unknown in East Europe.

In the heart of Transylvania, northern Romania, trainee facilitators from many districts, plus guests from other countries, will meet in autumn 2008 to be inspired and empowered, ready to launch work with senior citizens across their region.

While these programmes are underway, there will be several options in the last week of April to meet Natalia and Tamara in Scotland, both working to preventing child trafficking. They will be meeting the Project Convenors in St Cuthberts, and have other opportunities to meet Guild members in Galashiels, Aberdeen, Edinburgh and Glasgow.



Natalia Pleskachova (above right) is a psychologist from Minsk. She has worked for 'Children of Chernobyl' and now works with organisations such as "Children - Not for Abuse" to prevent the trafficking of children and young women. Poverty, alcoholism, domestic violence and new unemployment put children and teenagers at risk, especially between 15 and 17 years of age. Nata worked in a centre for returned trafficked women and raises awareness of all forms of abuse, working with the Charity Sisterhoods Union of the Orthodox Church in Belarus. Nata was in Lydia Project programmes in 1999, 2000, '01 & '07.

Tamara Botin, a teacher (above left) joined Lydia events in 2002-3, '06 and '07, and has become adept at setting up and organising new social outreach programmes with the Moldovan Orthodox Church. Her recent task has been to tackle the reasons that up to 40% of children are leaving eastward into bordering countries for begging, petty crime, sexual exploitation and pornography. Boys are taken to Russia, Turkey and the Middle East. With others she plans an international preventative programme.

We hope that you may have met them in St. Cuthberts or other events around Scotland. They are examples of the wonderful women committed to giving deprived people in their communities new options for hope and joy: improving their lives in body, mind and spirit.

Contact: .Lydia Project, 100 Strathearn Rd, Edinburgh EH9 1BB email: lydiaproject@fish.co.uk, tel. 0131 623 8946