



# **Some Preventive Measures of Children's Anti-social Behaviour: Animus Experience**

Animus Association  
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## This presentation

- The purpose of the presentation is to introduce you into some good practices in primary and secondary prevention of children's anti-social behavior in Bulgaria
- Instead of offering a wider range of different practices in fewer details it would focus on the work of the Animus Association Foundation
- This allows to present three of the Animus Association's programmes in more details, including organization of the whole process, evaluation of results – whenever it is possible – and some recommendations



## **Animus Association Foundation**

A non-governmental organization, established in 1994. The Mission of Animus is to promote healthy communication between people and gender equality in Bulgarian society. Its major activities include running following programs:

- Social Services Centre for Children and Families;
- “St. Petka” Crisis Unit for survivors of violence;
- Psychotherapeutic and Psychoanalytic Centre;
- Helpline for Survivors of Violence;
- National Helpline for Children;
- Unit for prevention, lobbying and networking;
- Training Centre.



## **This presentation will focus on**

Three activities of the Animus Association, related to prevention of children's anti-social behaviour

- The Trauma Centre for Children and Families
- Zippy's Friends Programme Project
- Methodology for Ensuring and Monitoring Child Participation in Developing and Evaluating Child Helpline Services Project



## **The Trauma Centre for Children and Families**

- The specialized Trauma Centre complements the existing child support system; it addresses the lack of accessible specialized services for psychological and social support of traumatized children and adolescents and their parents
- The Centre provides three service programmes: for traumatized children, their families, and for the larger community. Capacity-building activities for professionals working with the trauma through supervisions and debriefings are also provided



## **The trauma and youth delinquency**

- Both concurrent and longitudinal studies suggest that exposure to traumatic events in childhood is associated with adolescent involvement in the juvenile justice system
- The different types of events reported by juvenile offenders vary but often include multiple forms of trauma exposure



## How the Trauma Centre works

- The Child Programme aims at mobilizing the child's internal resources and strengthening his resilience to overcome difficult situations and be able to benefit from opportunities in life.
- Child therapy is conducted via talking, drawing, modelling or playing with toys through which the child tells about experienced trauma, and then digests and integrates it so that it cannot harm its future life. There are therapy rooms especially equipped for work with children up to 12.



## How the Trauma Centre works

- The game reveals the conflicts and fears that hinder their normal development and that they, in most cases, do not aware of. It takes 6 – 12 months before therapy has beneficial effect on the child's life.
- Adolescents aged 12-18 also receive a specialized working approach.
- The Parental Support Programme targets parents of deviant children who have difficulties managing their own emotions and helping their children change. It also targets non-violent parents of child victims of violence, and counsels foster parents/adopters.



## How the Trauma Centre works

- Community Support Programme provides on-site intervention and prevention (workshops) which make it easier for the respective community to understand and tolerate the dynamics of the child problem.
- Child cases also require multidisciplinary meetings which provide methodological support on case management and risk assessment to various child protection stakeholders.



## Results of two years of implementation

- The consultations have led to a positive change in the emotional atmosphere in clients' home, and they got a better insight of their own difficulties in relations with their relatives
- Clients report to have received support and understanding from their consultant
- Clients' understanding of the difficulties and problems of their relatives increased
- Most of them would call again in case they meet new difficulties



## Results of two years of implementation

- Most children's feedback indicates that they have received what they had needed from the meetings with the psychologist.
- Children liked most games, the psychologist they worked with them, receiving support, a chance to be heard, and specific aspects of the furniture or the design of the office (for example, "the house with wooden figures").



## **Zippy's Friends Programme Project**

- The aim: to help five - seven year old children to cope with problems and crisis situations in a healthy and constructive way - at this point in their lives or in the future - through the acquisition of skills for solving specific problems and understanding and mastering emotions - their own and others'
- Children learn to apply different strategies for coping with difficulties, increase their self-esteem and improve resistance to traumatic events, as a result they begin accepting and appreciating differences in class



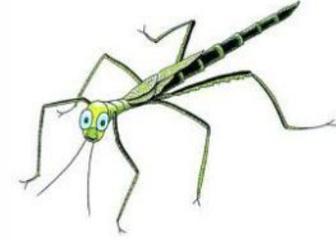
## **Children's anti-social behaviour and social skills**

- There is a link between social problem-solving skills and youth violence: when children and adolescents are faced with social situations for which they are unprepared emotionally and cognitively, they may respond with aggression or violence.
- The World Health Organization mentions that the children's anti-social behaviour (especially – violence) can be prevented by developing the life skills of young children



## **Children's anti-social behaviour and social skills**

- Life skills are cognitive, emotional, interpersonal and social skills that enable individuals to deal effectively with the challenges of everyday life.
- Evidence shows that preschool enrichment and social development programmes, which target children early in life, can prevent aggression, improve social skills, boost educational achievement and improve job prospects.
- The benefits of high-quality programmes of this type can also be sustained into adulthood



## Zippy's Friends Programme implementation

- It comprises of 24 lessons one class long each, and the entire program lasts one year
- There is a sequence of illustrated stories about Zippy – an insect pet - and his friends, a group of small children. The stories and activities cover everyday difficulties of the children. While listening to the stories and discussing raised by them issues, children enjoy fun activities (like drawing, role-playing techniques, games) and develop positive coping strategies.
- The programme consists of 6 modules, covering the areas of feelings, communication, relationships, conflict resolution, dealing with changes, and losses.



## How Zippy's Friends Programme helps children

- Traumatized children use defensive strategies, like challenging or deviant behaviour, that triggers the vicious circle of aggression and violence, since the “difficult” children take all negative projections of the group and are identified as the main problem of the class
- The “Zippy’s Friends” focuses on developing skills for verbalization of painful feelings so that they can be integrated into the child's personality and not to hinder the further development of the child



## **Zippy's Friends Programme: evaluation**

- Bulgarian research is in progress now
- The latest and most rigorous study was, which was published in 2012, was conducted with nearly 1,483 children aged 7-8 years old in Norway.
- Both children and parents reported positive effects in several coping strategies, particularly in girls and children from a lower socio-economic background.
- Children's assessments of themselves indicated a reduction in oppositional coping strategies, such as acting out and blaming others



## **Zippy's Friends Programme: evaluation**

- Their parents' assessments indicated an increase in active problem-solving and support-seeking strategies in their children.
- Academic skills, as assessed by teachers, were significantly improved for both boys and girls.
- The teachers also reported a significant moderate reduction in bullying and an improvement in social climate in the classroom



## **Methodology for Ensuring and Monitoring**

- **Child Participation in Developing and Evaluating Child Helpline Services Project**
- The methodology aims at integrating the child's point of view in the development and evaluation of child helpline services in Bulgaria, Romania, Poland, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, using the United Kingdom experience.
- It is of prime importance since no real mechanisms for the participation of children were available prior to the launch of the project, although the helplines were considered an important instrument in the protection and care for children in all of the above countries.



## Ensuring and Monitoring Child Participation

- There were children's groups aimed at ensuring the inclusion of children in developing the child participation methodology – up to 80 children, aged 11 to 19, from Bulgaria, Romania, Poland, Slovakia, and the Czech Republic.
- The groups were involved in series of 30 workshops devoted to various topics relevant to the different stages of development of the child participation methodology.



## Ensuring and Monitoring Child Participation

- The methodology builds on the model of child participation employed by the British 116 111 child helpline:
  - Child participation takes place in four major stages – a) involvement, b) participation, c) recording child participation and d) reporting and analyzing the outcomes of participation.
  - The process of child participation starts with the involvement of children, which could happen through various channels and can be either on an ongoing base or as a one-off participation activity, requested by a service, program or department at the organization.



## Ensuring and Monitoring Child Participation

- There are different participation tools: permanent children's group, field seminars or temporary children's group.
- An important element is the provision of group and individual support for all involved children on an ongoing basis.
- The provision of feedback is another key element. Feedback has to be provided from children to professionals, from professionals to children and from professionals and children to the service, program or department that has requested participation.



## Ensuring and Monitoring Child Participation

- Another central element is the measuring of the scope, quality and outcomes of children's participation. Evaluation along these three parameters is considered as prerequisite for meaningful child participation.
- In order for the participation process to be reflected on and conclusions and best practices to be drawn, participation has to be recorded. The results from the conducted children's seminars, the feedback collected from all involved parties, as well as the results from the evaluation of children's participation are recorded in a participation record tool or via online tools for ongoing participation, which can then be collected in a specialized online system.



## **Effective and meaningful child participation requires:**

- full understanding on the part of the involved adults of children's rights, the process of empowerment, the methods to encourage participation and the barriers to it;
- readiness to accept children's opinions and input that result from the participation, even if these are different from the ideas of the adults in the organization;
- active strategies and techniques for involvement of children and the use of many different channels to meet this goal;
- development of relevant expertise in the organization members who will be engaged in child participation so that they can develop trust and rapport with the children;



## **Effective and meaningful child participation requires:**

- individual approach to the children in order to keep their involvement, interest and motivation high;
- readiness to implement the meaningful changes and recommendations that have been proposed in the process of working with children; if children's ideas receive no real attention and are not implemented, at least to the extent possible, this will demotivate the children and will make the whole process false and meaningless;
- continuity – of the good practices and participation itself so that the practice of participation can develop and actually become part of the way the organization functions.



## Conclusion

- We still need more evidence of the effectiveness of these programs in the area of prevention of children's anti-social behaviour
- We also need to find an appropriate way to translate these evidence into more persuasive arguments in our collaboration with local authorities