



VIORICA CHIRNICIŢI Community Social Assistant, Moldova



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Overview

For the last eight years, Viorica has been employed as community social assistant within Loganesti village, Hincesti district, Moldova. She can be considered one of the emergency focal points in her community. When something happens, police officers call and inform her, even in the middle of the night. She loves the community, she is living for the sake of other people and the community respects and appreciates her.

Typical tasks and responsibilities

A community social assistant (CSA) provides support at the community level to a range of people in need: people with disabilities, elderly, low-income households and victims of human trafficking, including children repatriated mostly from the Russian Federation and Ukraine. Viorica's main tasks include: administration of social benefits, family support, child protection and support to other vulnerable people in the community. "Sometimes I come to work early in the morning at 7.45 a.m., and there are already families waiting for me. The most stressful period is during the winter, when people apply for winter support from the state. There are a lot of applications, and we need to process them in short time."

In addition, the massive migration of parents abroad in search of employment opportunities has had an impact on the situation of children left behind and generated additional responsibilities for social workers. One in five children has at least one migrant parent, while a number of children have both parents away from home. "I have almost 70 cases where parents are working abroad and left their children under guardianship. As a community social assistant, I visit these families, monitor the children's situation and check school attendance

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in order to ensure their active school enrolment. These families need more support in terms of intergenerational communication skills." Social services provided by community social workers for at-risk children and their families aim to prevent the abandonment of children in institutions and diminish the impact of hazardous situations on their development.

Training and skills

Viorica graduated from Free International University of Moldova as a social assistant in 2010. After three years of intensive studies, she received a bachelor's degree. She benefitted from various in-service trainings from the Ministry of Labour Social Protection and Family on different topics: case management, supervision, working with vulnerable groups, provision of social services and communication with clients. "I have so many certificates that I can cover an entire wall with them. These trainings helped me a lot. They enriched my knowledge and helped me to gain confidence in myself. Now I can help other people and guide them."

Why she loves her job

There are nearly 4,300 citizens in Loganesti village and only one community social assistant. "I know every community member and even when someone new comes to our village, I pay them a visit to see if they need our support." Community social workers in Moldova do not receive much recognition or pay, but being helpful to others brings satisfaction and increases self-esteem, she says. "Everyone in this village knows me. When we meet occasionally, they greet me and smile. I am very happy to be helpful to others." She takes pride in knowing that years later, many of those she has helped now have changed their lives and are doing well.



**"Improving the workforce.
Improving lives."**

Who is the social service workforce?

While capturing any one definition of the social service workforce is challenging, it can be broadly defined to describe a variety of workers – paid and unpaid, governmental and nongovernmental – who staff the social service system and contribute to the care of vulnerable populations. The social service system is comprised of a set of interventions, programs and benefits that are provided by governmental, civil society and community actors to ensure the welfare and protection of socially or economically disadvantaged individuals and families.

What is Social Service Workforce Week?

During this week, advocates will bring attention to and build support for the social service workforce as well as raise awareness about promising workforce strengthening efforts supported by stakeholders around the world. Organized around daily themes focused on areas of practice, the week will allow Alliance members and the public to engage in a dynamic platform of information exchange and advocacy through various forms of social media.

What is the Global Social Service Workforce Alliance?

The Global Social Service Workforce Alliance works toward a world where a well-planned, well-trained and well-supported social service workforce effectively delivers promising practices that improve the lives of vulnerable populations. Launched in June 2013, the mission of the Alliance is to promote the knowledge and evidence, resources and tools and political will and action needed to address key social service workforce challenges, especially within low- to middle-income countries.

The Alliance is funded by PEPFAR/USAID and the GHR Foundation. IntraHealth International acts as host and fiscal sponsor of the Alliance.

Learn More

Learn more about **Viorica** and other social service workers! Join the conversation on Twitter using the hashtag #SSWeek, on our Facebook page and at www.socialserviceworkforce.org/SSWeek.