



Ukraine, Kharkiv – East of the country – “Oasis of Peace” - Education and Health

“My dream is that there are no more misunderstandings or wars between countries; that politicians discuss things, rather than send out soldiers; that there are no more bombs; that Ukraine becomes a peaceful country”. Words of one of the children at the Oasis of Peace centre.

In Kharkiv, the AIC volunteers have set up an extra-curricular activity programme with a health component for disadvantaged children aged 4-18. In a protected space, these children can benefit from school catch-up classes and/or psychological support, according to their needs. They also receive a hot meal and participate in activities and games. During the summer they go on a holiday camp by the sea. They are also educated about citizenship and values.

The objective of the project is to develop the abilities of children from families in difficult situations so that they become active members of tomorrow’s society.

Context

This project, which began in 1998, has become even more important since the war with Russia broke out in eastern Ukraine in 2013. The children who are supported by the volunteers come from large, single parent or multi-racial families (there is a sizeable community of Nigerian migrants in Kharkiv). In a context of constant inflation and low salaries, parents are overwhelmed by their work and trying to make ends meet and spend little or no time looking after their children. Some of these children accidentally end up on the streets where they face all the dangers that this presents. Others need help with their homework. Others still have lost faith in their abilities or find it difficult to integrate into the community.



Project Theme and Activities

“Oasis of Peace” is an educational project for 30 children from disadvantaged families. The project includes an extra-curricular activity programme and a health component. Run by AIC volunteers since 1998 in the town of Kharkiv in east Ukraine, it offers the following activities:

- School support from teachers (catch-up classes, regaining the motivation to study, overcoming fear of failure, help with homework)
- Psychological support from psychologists (overcoming inferiority complexes, low self-esteem and lack of self-confidence)
- Creative activities to develop talents (games, arts and crafts, theatre, painting, trips)
- Training workshops to develop skills (IT, hairdressing, sewing, knitting)
- Health component: 5 hot meals per week, a holiday camp by the sea each summer, sports competitions, sickness prevention and funding of certain medical treatments
- Education about citizenship (workshops against racism) and Christian values



Key Figures

- 30 children regularly participate in activities each week and have done for several years
- 765€ is the amount needed to support one child for one year

Partners

- AIC Lombardy (Italy) at the beginning of the project
- Fathers of the Mission
- Daughters of Charity

Future Prospects and/or Impact

Since the project was set up, the volunteers have noticed the following improvements among the children who go to the centre:

- The children have renewed motivation and have rediscovered the desire to study. Thanks to the psychological support offered, they have overcome their inferiority complexes and their lack of confidence in their abilities.
- Their school results have improved thanks to the individual and personalised approach taken with each child with regard to his or her schoolwork.

- The children who once spent their free time hanging around on the streets where they were exposed to various dangers (drugs, prostitution, thieves, etc.) now use this time more constructively.
- The children have benefited from education about racism. Thanks to the presence of children from Kharkiv's Nigerian community during the activities, they have been able to see first-hand how difficult it is for migrants to integrate.
- Thanks to the sport, the regular hot meals (often the only ones they receive), the holidays in the sun and the preventive medical care, the general state of health of the children has improved.

