



# MEET RUSSIA'S FORGOTTEN CHILDREN



# There are more than 150,000 children in Russia's orphanages.

More than 30,000 receive no education and very little stimulation, because they have been labelled as "unteachable" and are in children's homes run by the Ministry of Health and Social Defense (MHSD), rather than the Ministry of Education.

*The children in MHSD orphanages are Russia's forgotten children.*



- Some of us have physical difficulties, like cleft palate, diabetes, or blindness, *that in no way impair our learning ability*
- Some of us show signs of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome
- Still others live with disabilities like Down's Syndrome and Cerebral Palsy

**Our biggest enemy  
is institutionalization  
without stimulation.**



- We are labelled as “unteachable”
- We are the last on lists for fostering and adoption
- The government doesn’t pay for us to go to summer camps, *as it does for other orphans*
- The government does not allocate us apartments at the age of 18, *as it does for other orphans*
- Because of the labels stamped in our documents, we are ineligible for employment

We are expected to go straight into closed adult institutions, which are often filled with drug use and human abuses of the worst sort, and where life expectancy is much lower than the national average.

**A number of us are smart but psychologically complicated, due to brokenness in our families of origin.**

About 100 of us live in the tiny hamlet of Belskoye Ustye, near Porkhov, Pskov Oblast, western Russia.

Since 2000, a charity called ROOF has brought an international summer camp to us, since the state doesn't send us anywhere for summer holidays. Out of that one little camp, more programs grew very rapidly.

First a weekend fostering program brought 14 of us into families at the weekends. And a "social hotel" program opened, to keep 5, then 10 of us from being transferred to adult institutions; soon a new and separate local charity was born out of ROOF's social hotel project.

**Now, about 20% of us can escape the fate of adult institutionalization.**

*That is still 80% too few—programs must expand.*



Every year in the month of July ROOF still runs its international summer camp, when about 30 carefully chosen volunteers from all corners of the world come to us to organize sports, dancing, theatre, crafts, hiking and all kinds of educational activities. With them they bring new friendship, new ideas and new hope for our lives.

**We *need* ROOF volunteers  
in our lives.**



We need ROOF volunteers in our lives because their mindset comes from far away. Often their hopes for us seem crazy and unrealistic. But their perspectives are broader, which allows them to believe and hope more for us than our local carers can. Our local carers are right to act out of fear to protect us, but ROOF's role is to ensure the presence of a creative tension that challenges the reasonableness of those fears.

**In this creative tension,  
new opportunities for us  
arise – opportunities that  
nobody ever dreamed  
were possible.**



ROOF hires teachers from Porkhov to come into the orphanage and work with us. Volunteers from Moscow and even farther away places like Britain, France, Holland and Poland now come year-round to spend time living in ROOF's Baranovo House, which is only 1km from our orphanage. They come to see us in the orphanage, and invite us to become part of their lives.

## One of us has grown up and now works as a ROOF employee!

Initially, the orphanage psychologist forbade this young man to join ROOF's social hotel program, and sent him on to the adult institution. But ROOF intervened and pulled him back into the world after nearly 5 months.

*Now, he is the caretaker at ROOF's Baranovo House.*







In 2009, the orphanage in Belskoye Ustye became the first and only MHSD orphanage in Russia to open a school funded by the state! Without ROOF's programs, which have consistently shown that *we can learn* and *we can live outside the institution*, there is little chance this would ever have happened.

**With your generous donation,  
you can help us deepen our  
work in Belskoye Ustye,  
and replicate it elsewhere...**

*...giving the gift of life back to  
Russia's forgotten children.*



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