

COVID-19 Emergency Intervention Report

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www.pentruviata.md

YOU ARE NOT ALONE Befriending Project



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Alumni Project with the Support of the US Embassy in R. Moldova

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About the project

Introduction

"You're not alone!" Befriending Project came as an initiative to provide emotional support to people severely affected by COVID-19 pandemic. For seven months, the team of 13 experts like psychologists, art-therapist, consultants and Suicide Prevention Lifeline certified volunteer counselors provided online support to most affected groups in need: people going through grief, burnout, career or business crisis, mental health issues or facing realities around suicide. It also lobbied for the empathic approach towards emotional pain associated with the realities around Pandemics and created an online library with the best practices of encouragement and emotional support for various communities in the Republic of Moldova. The project was active during June-December 2020.

PROJECT GOAL: Bringing the voice to the unspoken and "invisible" pain as a Public Health problem during pandemic times and providing emotional and community support to most vulnerable Suicide Prevention Lifeline visitors during June-December 2020.

This project came with diversified solutions to specific emotional suffering and threats, Moldovan people face during Pandemic times.

We worked closely with 5 groups of people:

- those marginalized and stigmatized due to facing realities around suicide,
- people with mental health disorders, loneliness and trauma, as they lack welcoming, listening, understanding environment
- people going through bereavement during COVID-19
- professionals experiencing burnout during COVID-19
- people with career/finances loss during COVID-19

PROJECT OBJECTIVES:

- Providing professional emotional support for 1000 people during June-December 2020
- Building a community of volunteer supporters nationwide during June – December 2020
- Providing a public voice to pain and suffering of most distressed people in society through 2 campaigns during June-December 2020.

Project activities

- 1. Providing emotional support through Lifeline chat on www.pentruviata.md*
- 2. Organizing, promoting and running support groups and live counseling events to vulnerable groups on social media and in the office*
- 3. Building a community of partners, friends and followers willing to reach out to those in needs*
- 4. Creating campaigns to be a voice of the voiceless people from those groups.*

IUNIE-DECEMBRIE 2020

PROIECT DE PRIETENIE
"TU NU EȘTI SINGUR!"

SCOP:
susținerea emoțională
a persoanelor cel mai
afectate de pandemie

 **LIVE**

- 75 ședințe live cu experții
- 538 membri 3 în grupuri Facebook

 www.pentruviata.md

- 472 conversații pe chat

Ambasada SUA în R.Moldova
Partener



1. Emotional support through Lifeline chat www.pentruviata.md

Although from a scientific point of view it is not clear yet how the realities around the pandemic are related to the phenomenon of suicide, but long-term emotional pain, which may have some negative impact on the people desire to live needs attention during these distressing times. Because emotional pain, if not taken seriously, is not treated, is not expressed, can accumulate. It actually tends to accumulate and in the long run some people, may face even deeper crisis, including dealing with suicidality.



In this context, the Suicide Prevention Lifeline www.pentruviata.md, operating as a chat service joined the efforts to provide emotional support to people affected by Pandemics. During project live, the website was reached by 1.296 visitors, while most of them (almost 300) visited our article "I want to die". 349 requests for emotional support came from the website and 130 – from social media. Most of our chat visitors are 24-34 years old (216 people) and the second age group is 18-34 (136 people).

Our team of 4 counselors from Moldova, Italy and UK provided 472 online emotional support sessions through chats, emails and social media for Moldovans from within the country and diaspora

Our volunteer counselor's reflections about our work

"It is a great privilege to journey together with the people most affected by Pandemics. I am honored to be part of our response initiative, "You are not alone Befriending Project". We are experiencing a profound and unique opportunity to provide emotional support to people from different generations being burdened by the crisis and painful realities during COVID-19. Each of them are so dear to me. As well as their stories I cannot forget.

The story of Elena whose mother is struggling with Covid-19 and having her own health issues. Or Alina who is in hospital and bearing huge guilt for considering herself a cause of spreading disease to her family. I remember Daniel who faced isolation and depression in his apartment while not being able to talk to anyone, or Ruslan who was anxious to go to the hospital, while his medical prescription for depression expired.

There are many people suffering around us, suffer in loneliness while struggling with invisible pain. Their time of 40 minutes discussions is an investment in their wellbeing. For some of them our listening empathic environment is life-saving and for many is life-changing. I am deeply moved any time we share our experiences with the team. People vulnerability and courage to make a difference in their lives by asking for help are such an inspiration for us.

It is a celebration for us and for our chat visitors when our emotional support service helps them to see their issues in different light. Their feedbacks about any small changes are signs of hope and success and encourages me to believe every time I close my work shift, that our work and efforts, despite our busy lives, are not in vain. We are part of the process of sharing strength and of contributing to better quality to their journey towards better life solutions. Their "Thank you, I feel better" means a lot to us"

Tina, volunteer counselor



Tina 23:25

Cu mare drag! Noi suntem aici pentru tine, si te incurajez sa revii oricând ai nevoie sa vorbesti despre durerea prin care treci, iar noi iti vom fi alaturi. Ai putea sa imi spui, inainte de a încheia cum te simti la moment?



Client 4650 23:25

Mult mai bine decat la inceputul conversației
M-am simtit mai bine când am avut cui să-i spun tot ce simt, să mă descarc



Tina 23:27

Imi pare bine sa aud ca serviciul nostru a putut sa iti fie de folos, acesta este si obiectivul nostru. Esti binevenit oricind simti nevoia. Eu iti doresc o seara buna si sa ai grija de tine in cel mai sanatos mod posibil.



Client 4650 23:27

Mersi mult pentru sustinerea dvs



Tina 23:28

Cu drag.

2. Support groups and meetings on social media and offline.



During the project we developed, promoted and provided live sessions with project experts in 3 closed Facebook Support groups (Bereaved during COVID-19, Career/financial loss struggles during COVID-19 and Burnout during COVID-19).

Out of planned 60 meetings we had 75 with 4903 views at the end of the project and approximately 65 viewers per meeting (and numbers are to grow as the groups remain open to new participants and the content is open to the public).

Each live session in the group was accompanied by the feedbacks, questions reflections and gratitude of participants through the comments. Many people followed the invitation to connect on personal level with our experts, our online chat www.pentruviata.md, which was operating right after the end of the sessions, or visited our office.

Our groups were promoted weekly through 3 promotion campaigns on social media. All of them included sharing banners with the announcements of the topics in the groups and we provided additional 39 live sessions for general public on our Facebook pages. These sessions had over 20.000 views.

Inspiration

“If there is no struggle, there is no progress.” — Fredrick Douglass

”One thing that is important to note is that the effects of social isolation and loneliness as well as the effects of social connection are long-term... These risks and data should not be taken as evidence that people should disregard recommendations to practice social distancing, quarantine or isolation in the face of this very immediate risk due to the virus. So it’s clear *to make distinctions between short-term risks and long-term risks.*”

— Julianne Holt-Lunstad, Ph.D.,
Professor of Psychology at Brigham Young University

The groups started activity on July 14 to the end of 2020 with free weekly meetings with specialists, as follows:

- Support group for people going through a crisis caused by professional burning (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/ardere.covid/> Weekly meetings every Tuesday, 20.00)
- Support group for people going through a period of mourning during a pandemic (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/doliu.covid/>, Weekly meetings every Wednesday, 20.00)
- Support group for people going through financial crisis (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/finante.covid/> Weekly meetings every Friday, 20.00)

The groups promotion video SPOT can be found here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0Y4hnhYA6ns>

Meet our support groups facilitators team

The team consisted of psychologists, art therapists, social workers, financial consultants

GRUP DE SUSTINERE
Criza financiară și Covid-19

f LIVE

ȘEZĂTOARE CU PSIHOLOGUL
Vineri 20:00

www.pentruviata.md

27 NOIEMBRIE
TEMA:
"De la criză la înălțimi financiare noi"

Psiholog Liuba Ceban

Tu nu ești singur!
Proiect de prietenie
Cu susținerea Ambasadei SUA în R. Moldova

GRUP DE SUSTINERE
Ardere profesională și Covid-19

f LIVE

ȘEZĂTOARE CU PSIHOLOGUL
MĂRȚI 20:00

www.pentruviata.md

15 septembrie
TEMA:
"Renașterea personală și regăsirea sensului nou de după criză"

Psiholog Iulia Gurițanu

Tu nu ești singur!
Proiect de prietenie
Cu susținerea Ambasadei SUA în R. Moldova

ГРУППА ПОДДЕРЖКИ
Criza financiară și Covid-19

f LIVE

каждую пятницу
в 20.00

ПОСЛАЕКИ С ПСИХОЛОГОМ

www.pentruviata.md

**А В ПЯТНИЦУ,
28 АВГУСТА
20:30**

ТЕМА:
Управление семейным бюджетом во время кризиса

 **Юрий Болдырев**
 экономист,
преподаватель финансов

Проект дружелюбия
Ты не один! 

При поддержке Посольства США в Р. Молдова

GRUP DE SUSTINERE
Ardere profesională și Covid-19

f LIVE

ȘEZĂTOARE CU PSIHOLOGUL
Marti 20:00

www.pentruviata.md

1 DECEMBRIA
ТЕМА:
"Сильные стороны личности и принятие решений при кризисе"

 **Арт-терапевт Анастасия Арсеньева**

Tu nu ești singur! 
 Proiect de prietenie
 Cu susținerea Ambasadei SUA în R. Moldova

GRUP DE SUSTINERE
Criza financiară și Covid-19

f LIVE

ȘEZĂTOARE CU PSIHOLOGUL
FIECARE VINERI 20:00

www.pentruviata.md

28 august
ТЕМА:
"Ce ne pot învăța pierderile financiare?"

 **Psiholog Valeria Crasov**

Proiect de prietenie
Tu nu ești singur! 
 Cu susținerea Ambasadei SUA în R. Moldova

GRUP DE SUSTINERE
Doliul și Covid-19

f Live

ȘEZĂTOARE CU PSIHOLOGUL
MIERCURI 20:00

www.pentruviata.md

26 august
ТЕМА:
"Limitele personale. Cum să spun NU!"

 **Lia Vîrtosu**
 psiholog

 **Pavalachi Doina**
 psiholog

Proiect de prietenie
Tu nu ești singur! 
 Cu susținerea Ambasadei SUA în R. Moldova

GRUP DE SUSTINERE
Ardere profesională și Covid-19

f LIVE

ȘEZĂTOARE CU PSIHOLOGUL
Marti 20:00

www.pentruviata.md

13 OCTOMBRIE
ТЕМА
"Răbdarea cu sine "

 **Psiholog Lina Chirnicin**

Proiect de prietenie
Tu nu ești singur! 
 Cu susținerea Ambasadei SUA în R. Moldova

- Burnout Support Group

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/ardere.covid/>

The live meetings in this group were taking place each Tuesday at 8pm. We planned in the project to have 20 meetings. As the group run from July until December 2020, we managed to have **27** meetings. As of the day of the end of the project we had **1270** participations at the lives. The group had **273** participants. The group statistics and participants is still expected to grow after the project is finished.

Month	Day	Meeting topic	Name of Facilitator	NR views
July	14	Intro meeting	Liuba Ceban	23
	21	Unconscious "benefits" of burnout	Liuba Ceban/ Anastasia Arsenieva	75/52
	28	The moment you realize you need to slow down	Valeria Crasov	116
August	4	What happens if we do not slow down	Pavalachi Doina	57
	4	Burnout: life story	Liuba Ceban	57
	11	Guilt which motivates to rush	Iulia Guritanu	111
	18	Setting the objectives and achieving new goals	Iulia Guritanu	135
	18	Burnout and career	Anastasia Arsenieva (RU)	82
	25	Burnout and significant relationships	Pavalachi Doina	48
	25	Burnout and relationships	Anastasia Arsenieva (RU)	46
September	1	When too many mistakes affected the relationship	Liuba Ceban	47
Suicide Prevention Week	8	When is the time to slow down, stages of slowing down	Liuba Ceban	187
	15	A new ME after the crisis	Iulia Guritanu	135
	22	From attitude of victim to attitude of victorious	Valeria Crasov	140
	29	Self acceptance and self efficiency	Lia Vîrtosu	67
October				
	6	New plans and new goals, mistakes and successes	Liuba Ceban	40
	13	Patience with self	Lina Chirnicinii	71
	20	Contact with self	Lia Vîrtosu	64
	27	Celebration of your unigness	Liuba Ceban	59

November	3	Rebirth of relationships and new relationships	Liuba Ceban	61
	10	You are not the same	Valeria Crasov	153
	17	Life lessons and friendships	Liuba Ceban	65
	24	New realities, new quality of life	Liuba Ceban	63
December	1	Our strengths and life-changing decisions	Anastasia Arsenieva (Russian)	44
	8	The art of saying "NO"	Lia Vîrtosu	48
	15	Closure meeting	Valeria Crasov	106

▪ Bereavement Support Group

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/doliu.covid>

The live meetings in this group were taking place each Tuesday at 8pm. We planned in the project to have 20 meetings. As the group runned from July until December 2020, we managed to have **23** meetings. As of the day of the end of the project we had **2152** participations at the lives. The group had **116** participants. The group statistics and participants is still expected to grow after the project is finished.

July	Day	Topic	Facilitator	NR views
	15	Intro meeting – 5 stages of bereavement	Lia Vîrtosu	37
	22	Talking to children about bereavement	Lia Vîrtosu	50
	29	The agony of bereavement: fury and fear	Lia Vîrtosu	53
August				
	5	The agony of bereavement: guilt	Lia Vîrtosu	57
	12	I am mad with myself	Lia Vîrtosu	55
	12	The life crisis of bereavement	Pavalachi Doina	48
	19	When people around me do not understand me	Lia Vîrtosu	49
	26	Personal boundaries	Lia Vîrtosu/Pavalachi Doina	60
September				
	2	Overwhelmed with the thoughts	Lia Vîrtosu	47
Suicide Prevention Week	9	When bereavement is challenging my goal to live	Liuba Ceban	363
	16	When pain of bereavement interferes with another crisis	Lia Vîrtosu	37
	23	We go through bereavement in our own ways	Lia Vîrtosu	43
	30	The grieve of the first responders family	Lia Vîrtosu	40

October				
	7	The loneliness of grieving	Lia Vîrtosu	36
	14	Dealing with the accusing voices on spreading COVID-19	Lia Vîrtosu	36
	21	My resources during bereavement	Lia Vîrtosu	28
	28	Losing control of your life while grieving	Lia Vîrtosu	42
November				
	4	Do I need professional help?	Lia Vîrtosu	28
	11	What happens if I do not express the pain of grieving	Lia Vîrtosu	22
	18	One step at the time	Lia Vîrtosu	36
	25	Embracing a new vision of a new life	Lia Vîrtosu	16
December				
	2	Fear of unknown	Lia Vîrtosu	29
	9	Transforming pain into inner power	Lia Vîrtosu	22
	16	Closing meeting	Lia Vîrtosu	36

- Financial Crisis Support Group

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/finante.covid>

The live meetings in this group were taking place each Friday at 8pm. We planned in the project to have 20 meetings. As the group run from July until December 2020, we managed to have **25** meetings. As of the day of the end of the project we had **1481** participations at the lives. The group had **149** participants.

July	Day	Topic	Facilitator	NR views
	17	Intro meeting		11
	24	Unnown me and crisis	Valeria Crasov	45
	31	About emotional heath, rumination and guilt	Liuba Ceban	35
August				
	7	Crisis and healthy and unhealthy coping with it	Liuba Ceban	46
	14	Rebirth of the initiative after multiple failures	Valeria Crasov	66
	21	About gratitude	Pavalachi Doina	25
	21	Art-therapy	Anastasia Arsenieva	35
	28	Education and financial crisi	Valeria Crasov	74
	28	Family and finances during COVID-19	Iurii Boldirev	47
September				
	4	When I lose my motivation in my workplace/business	anastasia arsenieva	40

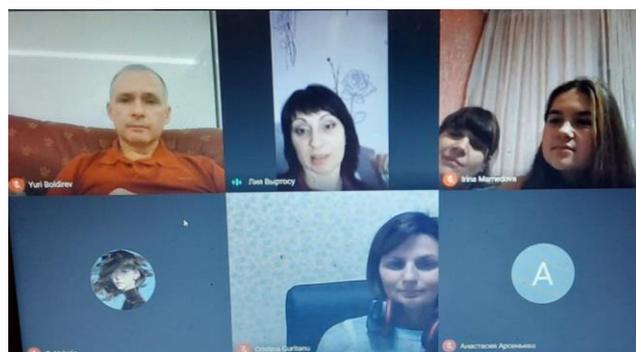
	11	My work values during crisis	Liuba Ceban	302
	18	<i>Self-appreciation during crisis</i>	<i>Lia Vîrtosu</i>	59
	25	Do not underestimate your crisis	Iurii Boldirev	32
October				
	2	When you have to take a temporary job	Liuba Ceban	44
	9	Self-control and frustrations	Valeria Crasov	89
	16	When relationships suffer during crisis	Valeria Crasov	85
	23	Talking to children about financial crisis	Iurii Boldirev	56
	30	Crisis changes you vision, choose your direction	Valeria Crasov	75
November				
	6	The art of learning something new	Anastasia Arsenieva (RU)	38
	13	About financial fidelity in the family	Iurii Boldirev	49
	20	What is my next step?	Liuba Ceban	36
	27	Setting your mind to action	Liuba Ceban	30
December				
	4	Who can help me during the crisis	Valeria Crasov	72
	11	Adjusting to new realities and patience	<i>Liuba Ceban</i>	42
	18	Closing meeting	<i>Anastasia Arsenieva</i>	48

Evaluation meeting

At the end of our activity, on December, 22nd, the online evaluation meeting of the team took place. The online project evaluation tools were used to record the experts' opinions about the project and the lessons learned. The meeting was attended by 7 participants.

Here are some **examples** of the evaluation questions discussed:

- What are the strengths of the project?
 - Innovative approach to support during COVID-19
 - providing the online empathic and encouraging environment for people right where they are: on social media
 - Genuine interest of participants to be part in the groups on social media
 - High quality, professional, evidence-based content of the activities in the groups
 - Opportunity for partnership, collegiality, support for the team
 - A helping, empathic, innovative environment for people seeking to receive help
 - Opportunities for growth and adjustment to the work remotely and adjustment of the content to online presentations.
- How many people contacted you personally after the live presentations?
Experts reported up to 8 private requests for help after sessions
- How useful did you find the project for beneficiaries?
5 team members reported as very useful, and 2 reported as useful
- What are your lessons from the project?
 - Learning flexibility in providing help in specific contexts people are facing.
 - I had to stay organized, focused, to continue pursue personal and professional development and to stay responsible to the commitment I made despite the challenging times, including for my health.
 - I learned from my colleagues to hear and to accept the difficulty of some realities as they are.
 - I learned confidence in public presentations, perseverance and doing a detailed research on the issue I had to address in my presentations. I learned to be focused on the client.
 - I learned to motivate myself by the hope that what I am doing is helpful to people. I exercised my ability for research and check for quality information and to step in sometimes in the areas less known.



- What were the difficulties of the project
 - The rhythm of continuous research before the live sessions, searching for the right content and techniques for the online presentations.
 - We had a limited interaction with our clients, which made sometimes difficult to evaluate the need of the audience.
 - It was a challenge to create a continuous content for promotion in order to attract in the groups people with a real need for emotional support. We didn't want to add people in the groups just for the sake of having them there.
 - It was a goal and a challenge in the same time to provide interventions that offered real help to people in the groups.
- What would you recommend to do differently?
 - What we would prefer is to have an environment where we can have a discussion with the participants who signed up for the sessions, so we could interact with them on a deeper level, have more feedback and ask for specific needs the audience wants to be met.
 - To engage more social media networks and having more team members and a social media actions and to be able to engage more people in the comments.

Sustainability of the project

In order to give the second life to the content of our online session and to transfer the best practices of the project to the communities at national level, the special **free online course on Emotional Support for Communities during COVID-19** was created. It is located on our Online Counseling School website (www.cursuri.mirt.md), which was created thanks to US Embassy support.

This course integrates our emotional support experience during pandemics and the 8 years' experience in the field, which our Suicide Prevention Lifeline has. It is freely accessible to professionals and general public on

<https://cursuri.mirt.md/course/index.php?categoryid=21>

3. Going beyond emotional support. Meeting another needs.

Right from the time of crafting our project and based on our previous experiences, we knew that we will not be able to address some cases with providing emotional support only. Because of the issues people are facing, a number of complimentary activities took place along the main work, project provided.

Due to our public activism, particularly on social media, we had many cases, when people were reaching out to us for help. And our team was happy to intervene where it was a case of mental health issues beyond the emotional support and to engage our community of friends, partners and followers in helping to meet another emergency needs.

In some of the cases where the needs were urgent and where we could provide safety for the team, we offered support outside the virtual environments and outside of the office.

In total we intervened in almost 20 emergency situations outside the emotional support framework of our project.

Meeting the needs during emotional crisis and mental health issues

Some of the most difficult situations were 3 situations when we had to address deep emotional crisis of people with the high risk of suicide and self and family members harm. As it is a challenging situation when a family is dealing with the deep mental health issues of a member, we had requests from people to help and guide them on what to be done.

In one case we provided guidance in hospitalising people in deep psychotic crisis, as well as mediated between a family and emergency service 112 to address the resistance of the relative to receive hospital care when it was needed.

“It’s extremely important that we recognize that anxiety is contagious, but so is compassion. And there are ways in which we can bring our communities together, even if virtually. We can take advantage of the technologies that are now at our fingertips. We can encourage positive community outcomes such as altruistic behavior, social cohesion, volunteerism, reaching out to those who are living alone or who are seniors.”

*— Roxane Cohen Silver, Ph.D.,
Professor of Psychological
Science, Medicine, and Public
Health at University of
California, Irvine*

The intervention took place on the streets of Chisinau, while a family with a person in distress came from raion to our office and then had a crisis episode, running outside. We had to plan how to negotiate with the person in distress, who was running from us and expressing symptoms of crisis in the face of the crowds of curious people, while negotiating with the doctors from the 112 service requesting flexibility on where they can meet the person and after that on taking the person to the hospital. Thanks to professional approach of our team, the family's willingness to cooperate and the 112 team doctor's negotiation skills the person was successfully hospitalized.

Another challenging situations were when a lady from Chisinau who was discussing with us her suicidal intent. After 6 hours of negotiation including on the phone we had to request the emergency service 112 to approach the person and provide safe space and to make sure her and her toddler son lives are outside of any danger. The next day together with community people, who asked us to help, we visited the person in her house to continue to provide emotional support and to help her manage suicidal thoughts without engaging in dangerous situations for her life and health. The partnership with the local police office took place as well. We learned that the person is not at her first attempt. And has issues with alcohol. The plan was made together with the police to find a right center to help person to deal with the challenges, while her volunteer supporters, which asked us to help, were seeking contacts to discuss with her family outside the country to intervene in this case. It was an example of a community of absolutely volunteer engaged people to reach out to this person.

And we had to visit a teenager at the hospital after suicide attempt as the family from raion was requesting for guidance and help during this challenging time. It was and still is a difficult case with multiple situations of attempted suicide, self-harm, suicidal thoughts. Our intervention in the hospital lasted 3 hours, while interactions with the family and local authorities was on the phone for several days.

Meeting another needs

Besides the emotional crisis and mental health issues, we addressed another needs as well in our community of people, volunteers and family members, who reached out to us for help. Where we could, we worked on meeting the physical needs or were requesting people to intervene in meeting those needs. Together with our local contacts (partners, volunteers, relatives) from Chişinău and at least 5 rayons) we worked on engaging people in donating and collecting food, clothes and hygiene products for people in crisis. We worked on supporting single mothers, people with disabilities and those whose household was flooded.

Another unusual for us requests for help were to support distribution of announcements of missing people. We also worked with people affected with the post Covid emotional distress or bereavement. The work was mainly remotely or in the office. And we intervened in cases of people reaching out to us, while being victims of violence and we connected them with the services and shelters providing protection.

We also provided guidance, consultancy and emotional support for medical, social work, police, psychology, local public administration professionals in addressing the needs of people in critical situations, they assisted and asked our professional opinion on the issues they were working on.

4. Creating campaigns to be a voice of the voiceless people from those groups.

Working with media is an essential work of any activities we do, including th Your are Not Alone Befriending Project.

The work on the PR materials for our launching campaign and intermediary campaign was coordinated by Cheptănaru Ecaterina, Open World 2013 Program alumna. Together with her media team they developed 2 video products for our online campaigns.

The first one **"Your pain needs care"** started on July, 14, when we announced in the press conference the launching of the project. The spot can be accessed here <https://www.facebook.com/247128208972289/videos/2528795327431432>

The second promotion campaign, **"Suicide is not a solution"** was dedicated to September 10, International Suicide Prevention Day. The spot can be accessed here <https://www.facebook.com/247128208972289/videos/325172475239379>

The spots were translated into sign language in the partnership with the Association for support of deaf people and was presented to the Coordinating Council of the Audiovisuals to be recommended for distribution in national and regional programs. Multiple media production institutions and journalists, including in the raions and Gagauzia, were engaged to support the project.

"It is extremely important ... that we acknowledge that this uncertainty is stressful. And in fact, this anxiety is appropriate under the circumstances. This is a normal reaction to our new normal. *And I think it's important that journalists acknowledge this fact.* It's also important that we tell the truth. The situation may get worse before it gets better. Evidence is strongly suggesting that we are probably not yet in the eye of the storm. But there is a potential to help frame a more positive message: If we work together, we can save lives. And minimizing the uncertainty is disingenuous." — Roxane Cohen Silver, Ph.D., Professor of Psychological Science, Medicine, and Public Health at University of California, Irvine

1. **The launching event** took place on July, 14 in partnership with InfoPrim Neo Agency. From our project we had 3 participants: Liuba Ceban Manager of the Project, Ecaterina Cheptănaru, Promotion Coordinator and Lia Vîrtosy, psychologist. The goal of the event was to announce the support services we have created for the most vulnerable population of R. Moldova affected by Covid-19.



In a press conference at IPN we discussed how pandemic has affected everyone and that we shouldn't forget that there are people who suffer on a deeper level.

This event gave us the opportunity to share and to expressed with the press and our Social Media community our concern for a very little public empathy and understanding towards people experiencing deep crisis and emotional pain while navigating through pandemics harsh realities.

"We aim to bring to attention of the public the importance of open discussions and empathic messages, when we address the topics around pandemics in the public space.

We strongly disagree with the misleading messages, cold statistics and anxiety growing sensations, which became a norm lately in the public space. Today it is important to draw attention to the fact that there are people among us who go through the terrible pain associated with the realities around pandemic and we need to express our consideration, compassion and understanding towards them when we speak about these cruel realities”, said Liuba Ceban.

Lia Vîrtosu, one of the psychologists in the project, mentioned that the "You are not alone!" Project is based on a solid foundation of empathy and care, it involves qualified specialists to whom people can turn to and ask for help. "This project is a bridge that can help you navigate from pain, uncertainty and anxiety to hope, new vision on the pain, courage, emotional healing and clarity", said Lia Vîrtosu.

We also announced the online groups meetings every Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday at 8pm. Ecaterina Cheptănaru presented the video spot aiming to promote the emotional support services provided within the project.

During the event it was also specified that every evening, on the website <https://pentruviata.md/> Suicide Prevention Lifeline counselors are open to provide emotional support to people going through deep pain and those facing different realities around suicide.

Materials from the press conference can be found here:

https://www.ipn.md/ro/durerea-emotionala-este-neglijata-pe-timp-de-pandemie-psihiolog-7967_1074867.html

https://www.ipn.md/ro/tu-nu-esti-singur-proiect-de-sustinere-pentru-cei-afectati-de-pandemie-7967_1074862.html

2. The second promotion campaign, „Suicide is not a solution”, dedicated to September 10, International Suicide Prevention Day.

The Suicide Prevention Lifeline pentruviata.md organized the **Suicide Prevention Week** under the motto “Suicide is not a solution!”

The events of the Week were dedicated to emphasizing on the importance of emotional support to the most vulnerable people affected by the realities of the Pandemic.

It is a measure to prevent the short and long term pain accumulation and thus potential danger of suicide. The events took place LIVE on the Facebook page of the Lifeline <https://www.facebook.com/LiniaPrevenireSuicid>

Săptămâna prevenirii suicidului
TEMA: Suicidul nu este soluție!
8-11 septembrie

ORAR:
JOI 10:00 -
COMUNICAT DIN
PARTEA LINIEI
PENTRUVIATA.MD
MARTI, MIERCURI
VINERI, 20:00 -
ȘEZĂTORI CU
PSIHOLOGUL

Pe pagina
"Linia Verde Prevenire Suicid"
www.facebook.com/LiniaPrevenireSuicid

10 SEPTEMBRIE
ZIUA MONDIALĂ DE
PREVENIRE A SUICIDULUI

Organizator:
Linia Verde pentru
Prevenirea Suicidului
www.pentruviata.md

Liuba Ceban
Fondatoarea Liniei,
Psiholog

Proiect de prietenie
Tu nu ești singur!
Cu susținerea Ambasadei SUA în R. Moldova

Multiple interviews for the press took place within the Suicide Prevention Week. Here is the *excerpt from the interview with the Free Europe Radio on International Suicide prevention Day, September, 10th.*

Free Europe: "The World Suicide Prevention Day, marked yesterday, September 10, was also an occasion and an urgent message in the Republic of Moldova, an invitation to understand the extent and severity of the suicide phenomenon, as well as the need to give people who are going through difficult times, a substantial professional support. In addition to many other problems facing Moldovan society, the high suicide rate cannot be considered marginal.

So yesterday, September 10, was World Suicide Prevention Day. A day of mobilization for all those who understand the extent and severity of the suicide phenomenon and who want to send a message of care and support to people who are going through terrible

emotional pain and reach the edge, as they say. Is, Ms. Ceban, the Republic of Moldova the place where the need for such a message is particularly obvious?

Liuba Ceban: "I think so, because, statistically speaking, we are in the top of countries with the high suicide rate in the world, we are not among the first ones, but we are in the red zone of countries with high suicide rate. And in terms of suicide, if we look at the European average, we are 20 percent above the European average. It's something to work on. There are a lot of unmet needs in terms of emotional support for people going through different hardships of life. "

Free Europe: And what are the specific forms can this day-to-day message take, and perhaps in a broader, longer-term perspective?

Liuba Ceban: "On World Suicide Prevention Day it important to mobilize the society and to share a message for people going through crisis. They must hear that suicide is not a solution, the solution is to talk about pain. I think here is where suicide prevention begins, when a person is given opportunity to talk about what's hurting, what's bothering, when there is someone who can listen. "

Free Europe: The Republic of Moldova, as you said, is on the list of countries with a high suicide rate, more than 500 people die each year, but we understand that the annual rate of suicide attempts is considerably higher, an estimated suicide attempt every 40 minutes, according to the recommended numbers of the World Health Organization. What explanations, Ms. Ceban, exist for this state of affairs? Is the Moldovan society, generally speaking, one that does not offer too much empathy, openness to understand suffering one or another individual may go through? In other words, is Moldovan society accentuates by its way of being loneliness, the state of impasse?

Liuba Ceban: "Yes, I believe that not only in our society, in many countries in the world, including the Republic of Moldova, we are not prepared to give an empathic and understanding answer to people who are going through hardships. Most of the time I think we are not informed, but we are also too focused maybe sometimes on our pain, on our discomforts and we forget about the fact that maybe someone next to us is feeling at the edge, and we forget about the fact that judging such people is not a solution. Solution is understanding, the pure human willingness to understand, what I think is largely lacking in our country. "

3. Participation on TV, radio and online shows and engaging journalists in promotion of the topic of neglected emotional pain.

In our promotion efforts the project got attention of the media and it was the topic for over 20 national, regional and international media materials about our work. Publika TV, TV8, ProTV, TVR Moldova, www.diez.md, www.sanatateinfo.md, BAS TV, Radio Vocea Speranței, Sputnik Moldova, Radio Vocea Basarabiei, TV Gagauzia provided their space to amplify the empathic message of the project towards vulnerable people.



We are dedicated to counsel and engage journalists in spreading the prevention-friendly approach to public engagement in addressing the topic of suicide. In the context of Pandemics various discussions and participation of our team at different programs, interviews, articles, and shows took place. We are dedicated to discussion about the need for long-term emotional and community support to those most vulnerable people during these days.

Besides the work with the media the project organized 3 weekly mass distributions on Social Media of live video and images announcements aiming to promote the topics of the meetings with the project experts.

4. Closing event

On December 30, the online closing event took place. We celebrated the beautiful results of the project. Resonating with the atmosphere of the winter holidays despite the harsh pandemic realities, the project closure event announced giving back to society the collections of online activities our experts organized. The materials from the 75 live sessions containing exercises, inspiration, how-tos and encouragements, together with the know-hows from 8 years of emotional support experience at Suicide Prevention Lifeline were gathered in an online library which is distributed to communities as supporting tools in helping people during Pandemics. It is a sustainable contribution of the project to improve the emotional health of people and to encourage different professionals and volunteers engaged in supporting community members affected by COVID-19. The library

is useful for professionals seeking to prevent and treat burnout in their lives, for people looking for counseling and support while navigating mourning or for people looking for resources and information while overcoming financial crisis during pandemics. The materials address also the aspects of healthy ways to address people suicidality as well. The library can be accessed free of charge on our Counseling School website at <https://cursuri.mirt.md/course/index.php?categoryid=21>

The "You are not alone!" befriending project was possible thanks to the support of the COVID-19 Emergency Fund for the initiatives of the exchange programs graduates of the US Embassy in the Republic of Moldova. And the result were celebrated by the donor and our long-term partner as well. A warm message from the US Embassy in the Republic of Moldova with kind words and appreciation of what the project team has done added to the beautiful end of the project was shared by Mrs. Anne Coleman-Honn, Acting Deputy Head of US Mission in Moldova.



The message can be found here:

<https://www.facebook.com/LiniaPrevenireSuicid/videos/153042119909098>

The LIVE press conference is here: <https://fb.watch/2I32CUrBpv>

5. A list of media publications and interventions about and during the project.

<https://sanatateinfo.md/News/Item/9646>

<https://protv.md/coronavirus/specialistii-spun-ca-covid-19-afecteaza-starea-emotionala-a-bolnavilor-pe-langa-sanatate-cu-ce-sfaturi-vin-psihoilogii-video---2548979.html>

<https://shok.md/fresh/psihologul-liuba-ceban-mergi-inainte-chiar-daca-ai-foarte-multa-nesiguranta-falimentele-sunt-parte-din-viata.html>

<http://important.md/index.php/soci/item/19730-psihiolog-suicidul-nu-e-solutie-trebuie-sa-vorbesti-despre-durerea-ta>

<http://tvrmdoldova.md/ro/actualitate/infectarea-cu-covid-19-decesul-unei-persoane-dragi-criza-financiara-sau-suprasolicitarea-profesionala-cauze-ale-depresiei>

<https://ziuadeazi.md/monstria-din-capul-nostru-o-statistica-ignorata/>

<http://www.trm.md/ro/social/pandemia-de-covid-19-afecteaza-sanatatea-psihiica-a-tinerilor>

<https://www.perfecte.md/social/in-toata-valtoarea-vietii-plina-de-griji-si-probleme-este-o-comunitate-de-voluntari-care-se-gandesc-la-viata-celor-care-nu-mai-vad-sens-in-ee-fara-a-cere-ceva-in-schimb-discuta-cu-oamenii-pe-care-nu-ii-cunosc-si-ii-conving-sa-traiasca-mai-departe-video---2540289.html>

<https://www.publika.md/cadrele-medicale-ard-profesional-marturiile-unui-doctor-scrisi-ale-psihiologului-de-la-linia-verde-anti-suicid-3080778.html>

<https://www.publika.md/persoanele-afectate-de-pandemia-de-coronavirus-pot-beneficia-de-consiliere-psihiologica-gratuita-3080639.html>

<https://tv8.md/2020/07/03/video-anxietate-depresie-lucruri-prin-care-trec-dar-despre-care-cel-mai-ades-tac-pacientii-infectati-sau-tratati-de-covid-19>

<http://www.trm.md/ro/moldova-1-promo/cine-vine-la-noi-psihiologul-liuba-ceban>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M-tyqDAa2Gc&feature=youtu.be>

[https://moldova.europalibera.org/a/liuba-ceban-\(pentruviata-md\)-suicidul-nu-se-uit%C4%83-la-buzunarul-oamenilor-/30833418.html](https://moldova.europalibera.org/a/liuba-ceban-(pentruviata-md)-suicidul-nu-se-uit%C4%83-la-buzunarul-oamenilor-/30833418.html)

Conclusions

1. The new realities people experience during pandemics affect emotional wellbeing. This is a well-known fact, as people face uncertainty, anxiety and loss. And although it seems that people already adjusted to the new reality of COVID-19, there is still a lot of unaddressed pain and suffering in our communities. The need for emotional support is still a real unmet need during these challenging times
2. Professionals helping communities deal with the realities around Pandemics are one of the most affected groups, when it comes to their physical and emotional health. The last one still requires research, initiatives and pro-activeness to be addressed. Our project was a small example of what has to be done to make interventions context-sensitive and to consider particularities of each situation separately.
3. The project online activities enjoyed attention of like-minded people from many professional backgrounds, seeking to diversify their view on the ways we can support people affected by the realities during pandemics. Solidarity with suffering people, care, empathy and willingness to help those in crisis was a characteristic of the team of our experts, despite the fact that some of them and their families also went through COVID-19 and were dealing with the emotional effects of the disease.
4. The international communities of researchers and experts, Suicide Prevention lifeline www.pentruviata.md is a part of, were of great help in shaping the needed contextualized support to people affected by the Pandemics. Understanding that we are dealing with a specific aspects of traumas associated with COVID-19 helped our team members to navigate through the different aspects of realities people we supported faced. Still, we are just at the beginning stage of understanding the particularities of the contexts, people dealing emotionally with during COVID-19 and will deal after.
5. The activity and the public voice of the project shaped the public message towards empathy and care while addressing the topics around pandemics. Still, emotional pain and the need to address it, particularly for prophylaxis of suicide cases growth in time, remains almost a no priority for R. Moldova. Sensations, statements without being proved by the evidences and myths about connection between pandemics and suicide are still strongly present in the society, in professional speeches and materials, as well as in the media.

6. The project was a hub, which gathered like-minded professionals willing to explore how particular issues, people face during pandemics can be addressed on a deeper level, outside of the general approach towards anxiety, uncertainty and loss. It will take time and another projects, which will allow the team to condense the experience of the project with the international research and initiatives in the area in order to develop a new sustainable evidence-based support system or maybe a service for long-term intervention in helping people overcome the consequences of the pandemics.

7. The devastating effects of the pandemics like suffering, tragedies, the most terrible pain and loss are most strongly felt and experienced within the communities, be they a small or large family, a service team, a village, an ethnic, religious community, an interest group, a service center, a town or region. The places where people are interact closely every day. And here is the most need to invest in addressing that pain.

The experience of our project brings a little, but important contribution to empower communities by the content of the online library we created. It was developed with the understanding of the challenges like how to support people during their vulnerabilities so they would receive hope, resources and strength to move on in their lives despite the challenges. It is not simple to find the right words when the neighbor suffers from the loss of a loved one, or faces harsh realities related to financial or job loss, or experiences the drama of losing the meaning of their so much needed now job in the context of burnout, or is feeling overwhelmed with emotions associated with the loss of the meaning of his life.

8. The Republic of Moldova remains on the list of countries with a high suicide rate, where extend of the reality of the phenomena is not known, nor researched. We estimated a rate of 1 suicide attempt every 40 minutes, according to the recommended estimations of the World Health Organization. Moldovan society, generally speaking, does not express too much empathy, openness and understanding towards human sufferings. And a long road of putting the human face on emotional pain is still to be traveled in R. Moldova. This is why the initiatives like "You are not alone!" Befriending Project, which aimed to get with its empathic message and contextualized profound approach and solutions to the core of human pain and suffering is the type of initiatives a country and donors' community should continuously support.