



A family for all children

A photograph of a young Black woman with her hair in braids, wearing a white long-sleeved shirt with gold buttons and a black face mask. She is smiling and holding a young child with blonde braids. The child is wearing a white long-sleeved shirt and green shorts, and is hugging the woman. The background is a wooden wall.

YOUR IMPACT
FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

OUR VISION

All children grow up in safe and loving families.

OUR MISSION

To fight for every child's right to a family by transforming care systems around the world.

Lumos is fighting for every child's right to a family by transforming care systems around the world. We are an international charity striving for a future where every child is raised in a safe, loving home, supported by family to help them thrive.

On average more than 80% of children in orphanages have a living parent, and research proves that these institutions can harm a child's growth and development. Yet there are still an estimated 5.4 million children trapped in institutions globally.

Lumos sheds light on the root causes of family separation – poverty, conflict and discrimination – and demonstrates that children can safely be united with families. By pressing and supporting governments to reform care systems, and by building global expertise and capacity with partners, we ensure no child is forgotten.

Founded by author J.K. Rowling, we are lighting a path to a brighter future where all children can grow up in a safe and loving family.

We believe in a family for all children. Together, we are Lumos.

wearelumos.org

In a year of exceptional challenges, your support has meant we could deliver real change for children around the world. The results in this report – and the difference we've made together – are something to be proud of.

THANK YOU.

MY NAME IS ELIŠKA...



“

... and I'm from the Czech Republic. Before I started working with Lumos, I was aware of the issue of children living in institutions and I was always interested in it. Joining Lumos' youth group in 2017 was an opportunity for me to engage and do something meaningful to help others.

Through the pandemic, Lumos has helped me to keep busy in difficult times and fill some of my time with meaningful activity. I've participated in a seminar, a press conference, and spoke in front of some of the highest representatives in the Czech Republic – a huge challenge! I enjoy using my voice to advocate for children's rights. It's a great opportunity for me to ensure that some things won't happen to children anymore.

I see that things are changing and I'm glad to be a part of it. I would like to continue to work with other youth advocates here to develop resources and ideas, to inspire other organisations to develop child and youth participation. If others believe in and support young people's involvement, then it's very motivating to them and great things can happen to change children's lives.

”

YOUR IMPACT FOR CHILDREN

We're driven by the vision of a world in which all children grow up in safe and loving families. For the past 16 years, we've worked alongside governments, civil society organisations and communities to change care systems to benefit everyone.

Today, thanks to the efforts of Lumos and our partners, the harms of institutionalisation are more widely understood. Backed by better data and increasing evidence from the fields of neuroscience and early childhood development, there's growing consensus that no child belongs in an institution.

2008 TRAINING CZECH PROFESSIONALS

Since we began working in the Czech Republic in 2008, the number of children in institutions has fallen by a quarter from 10,388 in 2008 to 7,921 in 2019.

2006 TRANSFORMING MOLDOVA

Thanks to our work with government and civil society partners, the number of children in institutions in Moldova – over 11,500 children in 2006 – had fallen by 90% in 2018.

2010 REINTEGRATION IN BULGARIA

We created innovative demonstration programmes in Bulgaria's Dobrich and Varna regions to reintegrate babies and children with complex disabilities into family-based care.

2013 REDIRECTING EU FUNDS

Our joint advocacy with others helped change regulations governing European Structural and Investment Funds, leading to around €2.7 billion being allocated towards reforming care systems.

2017 LAUNCHING YOUTH ADVISORY BOARDS IN EUROPE

In 2017, we launched national youth advisory boards in Bulgaria, the Czech Republic and Moldova to provide opportunities for young people to advocate for their rights.

2015 SHINING A SPOTLIGHT ON HAITI'S ORPHANAGES

We worked with partners to assess 571 orphanages in Haiti, revealing that only one in four was licensed to operate and finding evidence of abusive practices in many of them.

2015 HIV CARE IN COLOMBIA

We worked with Fundamor, a Colombian NGO caring for children living with HIV, to transition from operating an institution to supporting family-based care.

2018 DISABILITY RIGHTS IN JORDAN

We helped the government in Jordan to shape national legislation on the rights of people with disabilities and develop a pioneering 10-year deinstitutionalisation strategy, with the potential to transform thousands of lives in the country.

2019 A LANDMARK IN CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

After years of advocacy by Lumos and our partners, the UN General Assembly adopted the landmark Resolution on the Rights of Children, focused on children without parental care.

2020 GROUND-BREAKING RESEARCH IN THE LANCET

We played a key role in presenting authoritative and comprehensive evidence in *The Lancet*, showing the scale of institutionalisation worldwide, and the harm it causes.

In diverse countries and contexts, we're proving change is possible. Demonstrating that, with careful planning and management, child protection systems can be transformed. With children and families at the heart of our new strategy, we will build on our rich heritage to ensure we achieve an impact greater than the sum of our parts.



* YOUR 2020 HIGHLIGHTS *

In **Kenya**, we've helped **102 children** affected by COVID to stay in a family setting. We provided technical support and guidance to a children's organisation in Nairobi, helping to support children and young people – some of whom were living on the streets – to return to their own families or to another loving home.

102

17

Young people leaving the care system face many challenges, from finding a place to live to getting a job. Despite COVID restrictions presenting extra challenges this year, we managed to support **17 young care leavers** in **Bulgaria's** Dobrich and Varna regions – providing training, professional courses and opportunities, and emotional and psychological support.



26

The pandemic has put a strain on vulnerable children and families – but we're determined to make sure no children are institutionalised as a result. **26 organisations**, led by Lumos and Hope and Homes for Children, called on governments and EU institutions to take action to support vulnerable families and children in alternative care across Europe.

In **Colombia**, we helped organise 10 events attended by **170 psychologists, social workers and caregivers**. Topics discussed included the negative effects of institutionalisation and the psychological and social support needed for successful family reunification. It's all part of our work to transform the institutional care system in Colombia and promote children's right to grow up in a family.



170

With our partners at the Michin Foundation in Bogota, **Colombia**, we've been demonstrating how to support family reunification. By working with young people and their families through home visits and – due to COVID – remote support in areas like positive parenting skills, education and extra-curricular activities, we've helped reintegrate **125 boys and girls** with their families.



31

Young people with lived experience of institutions and alternative care need to be heard. We supported **31 children and young people from 22 countries** get involved in the UN Day of General Discussion on Child Rights and Alternative Care. Their involvement ranged from planning the event to advising on a global research project that will document the experiences of children in alternative care.



125



5.4^M

We supported ground-breaking research estimating that **5.4 million children** live in institutions worldwide – but highlighting that many of them currently go uncounted. The shocking figure comes from a paper, commissioned by Lumos and published in *The Lancet Child and Adolescent Health* in March 2020.



In **Haiti**, we've pushed for the closure of 13 orphanages where children are at risk of trafficking. Four more were closed this year, and we worked with partners IBESR to reunite **59 children** with their biological families. But child protection challenges in Haiti won't go away just by closing institutions – poverty and the lack of opportunities and services in remote areas must also be addressed.

80+

In **Jordan**, we worked with the government and NI-CO to deliver training for more than **80 members of staff** at Karak Centre, a residential institution for people with disabilities, to raise awareness about care reform. We know that many staff who work in institutions are committed, caring people – and many could be retrained to become social workers, family support workers, community nurses, foster parents and more. Getting them on board from the beginning is crucial in the move from institutions to community and family-based care.



We supported the placement of **1,328 children and young people** in family or community-based care



We helped **15 residential institutions** to close or to transition to another type of service provider



In 2020, we worked with our partners to provide support services to **1,234 carers**



We trained **2,864** stakeholders to increase their technical skills and knowledge around care transformation

13

We worked with partners to safely reunify **13 Guatemalan children** with families after they had been forcibly separated by US border authorities, providing each family with six months of follow-up support. In 2018, around 4,000 migrant children were taken from their families at the US border and placed in institutional care while adults were detained or deported. With our partners at International Social Service USA, we've been working to trace families and help local social workers provide them with the support they need, including counselling and access to medical care, education and other services.



45



Social media can be a useful weapon in the fight against child trafficking. In **Haiti**, we organised **45 hours of training** on the use of social networks for communications and advocacy. The training brought together more than 40 child protection professionals from state institutions and local NGOs.

250+

Our team in **Moldova** directly supported more than **250 children** – including reuniting 24 children who were in institutional settings with their families and preventing 22 children from 13 families from being placed in institutions. We also supported the national roll-out of inclusive education units for children with severe disabilities and complex needs following a successful pilot, and set up inclusive education services in 16 kindergartens. Children with special needs will now be able to attend mainstream schools, meaning they can remain living at home with their families.



115

In **Panama**, we worked with partners UNICEF and SENNIAF to train **115** national and regional government representatives and civil society professionals on the importance of transforming care systems, strengthening family and community-based alternatives and keeping families together. We also provided support in developing a national action plan for the deinstitutionalisation of children and recommendations for transforming the care system.

In Zhytomyr, **Ukraine**, we're demonstrating how to transform residential care into a family and community-based system. Since we began our work in the region in 2019, we've supported the transformation of seven residential institutions. Four have closed and three are in the process of closure – and the number of children in institutions has fallen by more than a third. In 2020, we helped **234 children** leave institutional settings – 162 were reintegrated into their biological families and 61 into alternative family care, including 56 children under the age of six.

234



RISING TO THE CHALLENGE

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought major challenges for vulnerable children and families all over the world – and impacted our ability to raise the vital support needed to fund our work. Major face-to-face fundraising events, like our planned gala event in the US, were cancelled or moved online. Many fundraising challenges like marathons were postponed or cancelled, and fundraising in schools, universities and the community has been severely curtailed.

But we've embraced the challenge, utilising digital communications and fundraising like never before. We've produced video stories across our social media channels, sent out regular emails and mobile-friendly newsletters to keep our supporters engaged and informed, and tried out new virtual fundraising activities like the Charitybuzz online auction.

We're grateful to our long-standing supporters – including Scholastic and Warner Bros. – and everyone who helped us continue our work through the pandemic. We were also delighted to launch three major partnerships with Comic Relief US, the Kahane Foundation and the Latin American Children's Trust.

None of our achievements would be possible without your support. We're really grateful to all of you who have stayed with us during such a difficult year – dedicated donors and fundraisers, ambassadors and influencers, staff and volunteers. A heartfelt thanks for everything you have done for children and families around the world.

FIND OUT MORE AT [WEARELUMOS.ORG/STRATEGY](https://wearelumos.org/strategy)

HOW WE'LL FIGHT FOR EVERY CHILD

In the coming years, we'll work hard to translate global commitments into local action, leading to lasting change for vulnerable children. We'll galvanise and support governments, civil society and other influential organisations to transform global policy intentions into action around the world. By sharing our learning and expertise, we'll also support locally led efforts that lead to lasting change and safe, quality care for vulnerable children.



1 BUILDING GLOBAL EXPERTISE

We'll use our knowledge and experience to support those responsible for reforming care systems in their own countries. This will include learning exchanges where they can share experiences and challenges, and providing technical support, evidence and guidance to help design and run better care systems. Importantly, we'll make sure that people with lived experience of institutionalisation are included throughout the process.



2 CATALYSING CHANGE

We know that ending institutionalisation benefits children and society – and we'll use this evidence to motivate and press governments around the world to reform the way they care for children. This will involve leading targeted research and advocacy campaigns to identify and tackle the drivers of institutionalisation, promoting more accountability by carefully tracking and highlighting progress, and influencing international funding, programmes and policy.



3 DEMONSTRATING & INNOVATING

Building on our heritage of successful programmes showing how care systems can be reformed, we'll use what we've learnt in the past to support partners with their own reform efforts. Over the next two years, as we complete our current country demonstration work in Eastern Europe, we'll identify programmes in new regions – building expertise and evidence of what good care reform looks like in challenging contexts, particularly for those children that typically get left behind.

Thanks to Lumos' team in Colombia and our partner Michin Foundation, Ana (pictured left) and her siblings are home again. We've been working with Michin to support the family through the pandemic.



A FAMILY REUNITED

"MY MAIN DREAM IS TO FINISH HIGH SCHOOL AND MY STUDIES WITH GOOD GRADES.

WHEN I GROW UP, I WANT TO BE A ROBOTICS ENGINEER OR A NOVELIST."

ANA, COLOMBIA

By her own admission, Ana wasn't an easy child. "I didn't like to be with my brothers or take care of them," she says. "I used to run away from home and I didn't think about anybody. Or myself."

Things got worse in 2018, when Ana was 13. Her mother, Gloria, was struggling to look after Ana and her two younger brothers, Juan (now 11) and Pablo (9). Overworked but short of money and without a suitable home or family support network, Gloria turned to the state for help. Ana and her brothers were placed in the care of Michin Foundation, a residential institution in their home city of Bogotá, Colombia, until Gloria could get back on her feet.

A year later, thanks to Lumos and Michin, the children were able to return home. As part of our efforts to transform the care system in Colombia, we've been working with Michin to transition away from providing institutional care to focus on reintegrating children with their families, finding foster homes and helping families stay together.

A team of psychologists and social workers guided Ana and her family through the reunification process. Ana and her siblings received practical help to take part in school, homework and out-of-school activities, as well as vital emotional support and tools to strengthen and improve their relationships and confidence. Gloria enrolled on an employment programme for women in the local area and found work as a dressmaker.

Things were going well for the family – then the COVID-19 pandemic hit last year. Gloria's work dried up, causing the family more financial difficulties. Lockdown increased anxiety and stress for everyone, and Ana returned temporarily to care. But with our partners at Michin, we stepped in with emergency food packages and support with the rent, and Ana was soon able to come home again. We continued to support Ana and her brothers with home learning while schools were shut.

Today, Ana is less angry and more understanding. She can't wait to sing in the school choir again and is learning the cello. She's hopeful about her future: "My main dream is to finish high school and my studies with good grades. And when I grow up, I want to be a robotics engineer or a novelist."

For Pablo, the most important thing is simply being with his family: "What I like the most is that we spend time together," he says. "That we go out to the park. **That we support each other.**"

RESPONDING TO THE CRISIS

The COVID-19 pandemic amplified the challenges that vulnerable children and families already face – from poverty and unemployment to lack of access to health, education and social services. Shifting to online learning was a struggle for many children and young people with disabilities and special educational needs or without reliable internet access and devices. Care leavers missed out on social housing and food packages, leaving some homeless and hungry. Violence and abuse increased in both families and institutions.

As residential institutions went into lockdown, children were cut off from contact with families and communities. In other cases, children were sent back to their families without proper preparation, safeguarding or support.

All these issues caused extra challenges for our teams around the world – even as we had to stop almost all our face-to-face work. But we rapidly reviewed our ways of working so we could continue to support vulnerable children and families safely.

We distributed much-needed emergency food and hygiene kits to protect the lives of vulnerable children and their families. At the same time, we worked harder than ever to prevent family separation, ensuring parents can care for their children at home.

We adapted our ways of working so we could continue to provide psychological, social and emotional support remotely. Much of our technical support, training, campaigning and research also continued online – from delivering virtual training, to sharing our research through webinars and developing online tools. Through our advocacy work, we pushed governments to make sure the needs of vulnerable children and families remained a priority during the pandemic.

Since the start of the pandemic in March 2020, thanks to you, we've been able to provide support to **1,069 vulnerable carers** and **1,107 vulnerable children**. We've also delivered **2,661 cash grants** to financially assist families.

OUR PROGRAMME TEAMS ADAPTED QUICKLY AND TOGETHER WE DID SOME AMAZING THINGS...

EMERGENCY COVID APPEAL



In early 2020, we launched an emergency appeal to support our response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Our supporters generously donated £220,000, including a gift of £100,000 from our valued funding partner, the UBS Optimus Foundation. With this funding, we were able to provide immediate support for vulnerable children and families. We were also able to quickly adapt our ways of working to continue our vital ongoing efforts to reunite children with their families and prevent family separation from happening.

2,848

WE CONDUCTED **2,848 PSYCHOSOCIAL SUPPORT AND COUNSELLING SESSIONS** WITH CARERS, CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

In **Ukraine**, we supported the National Council of Children and Youth to develop an information campaign, **#quarantineholiday**, with resources, ideas and inspiration to support children and young people in quarantine.

In **Bulgaria**, Lumos created the National Covid Monitoring Group with NGOs from around the country and local authorities, making sure we had expertise in the areas of children with disabilities, education, refugee children, violence, Roma children and family support. We met every month to exchange information and support each other.

In **Colombia**, we provided food and economic support to vulnerable families, as well as emotional support to help children and adults manage stress, financial worries, homework and general wellbeing.

In **Moldova**, we provided food and hygiene packages for more than 60 children and their families, and held over 2,300 psycho-social support sessions with children and young people to help them cope with anxiety, isolation and bereavement. We also delivered 20 virtual training sessions for 300 professionals on monitoring and supporting children at risk during the pandemic.

In **Kenya**, we helped trace children who had been rapidly released from institutions as a result of COVID to ensure they could get the support they needed. We also supported the Kenyan government to develop ways to safely enable children to remain with their families when and where possible, after the institutions reopened.

In Haiti, we helped to reunite families such as Victor's (pictured with his family) and support them with hygiene kits and food packages.



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REUNITING FAMILIES IN HAITI

In Haiti, we've been working with the government to close down orphanages that are linked with child trafficking. One of these institutions attempted to move the resident children to another location when the authorities were busy dealing with the emerging pandemic. Fortunately, our increased monitoring meant we stopped this happening, and were able to reunite 20 children with their families.



SUPPORTING FAMILIES IN UKRAINE

When the coronavirus crisis hit Ukraine, the government decided almost 75% of children living in institutions would be returned home. Although we welcomed children being returned to families, there was no preparation, planning or ongoing support. We moved quickly, working with the Ukrainian government to identify 43 vulnerable children in 26 families to provide support packages. We also supported the government to develop guidelines for social workers, local authorities and professionals to help families stay together through the crisis and beyond.



PROTECTING VULNERABLE CHILDREN IN BULGARIA

Our team in Bulgaria identified children and families who needed emergency support during the pandemic – including one boy whose complex health conditions meant even shopping for food was a real risk. We supported him and his foster mother to move into a new government property where he could be safely cared for – and arranged access to essential food and medication.

“DURING THE EMERGENCY, THE HARDEST THING WAS TO FIND FOOD. THANKS TO LUMOS, WHO BOUGHT MEALS, I DIDN'T HAVE TO GO OUT EVERY DAY TO SHOP. I USUALLY HAVE TO TAKE ISUS WITH ME AND THIS WOULD HAVE PUT HIM AT RISK.”

DIMA, BULGARIA



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CHILD & YOUTH PARTICIPATION



Children and young people have the right to have their say in the decisions that affect them – and this is something we take seriously. Our country programmes have youth advisory boards, with monthly meetings that feed into and advise our work. We also support self-advocates – people with lived experience of institutionalisation and their allies – to speak up for themselves.

This year, because of COVID, most of our youth participation activities took place online, and we dedicated time to supporting youth advisory board members who were affected by the pandemic. In Moldova, self-advocates created a film to highlight the impact of COVID-19 on children and vulnerable families, and in Bulgaria they created a travelling storybook of young people's experiences. They also supported their peers to understand how to stay safe and created activities and social media challenges.

Another big event in the calendar in 2020 was the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child's Day of General Discussion (now postponed till September 2021). Having previously proposed that this biennial event should focus on children's rights and alternative care, we led the overall planning and coordination, particularly making sure that children and young people participated in every stage of the process.

SELF-ADVOCATE STORIES

Young people from the Lumos youth advisory board in Bulgaria created a travelling storybook to show solidarity with their peers in care. Dedicated to all children and young people in care across the world, this book includes stories from self-advocates in Bulgaria, Moldova, the Czech Republic, Ukraine, Austria, Cyprus and the UK. According to the young authors, the book "demonstrates that there are no geographical or other borders when young people want to support each other, share their difficulties, and dream together".

YOUNG ADVISORS SHAPE UN DISCUSSIONS

We're putting children and young people with direct experience of alternative care at the centre of the UN Day of General Discussion. In planning the event, we worked with partners to set up two advisory teams of 31 children and young people from 22 countries, with a broad range of care experiences – including a member of the Lumos youth advisory board from Moldova. The teams have been involved throughout the planning process, from developing the concept note to advising on a global research project that will document the experience of children in alternative care globally.

YOUNG PEOPLE OFFER ADVICE FOR CZECH JUDGES

Members of our Czech youth advisory board took part in a project with the Judicial Academy, the training centre for Czech judges. The project aims to collect experiences from children who have been through court processes, and to use this to improve proceedings and training for judges. Lumos supported youth advocates are helping the Judicial Academy to set up a number of child and youth focus groups to discuss particular topics, such as fostering and institutional care.

DISABILITY DISCUSSIONS IN GREECE

In Greece, we brought together young people, self-advocates, disability activists and local professionals to discuss perceptions of disability to support a UNICEF youth participation programme. With LUMOS's support, UNICEF currently supports a Youth Steering Committee as well as a Committee of young self-advocates with institutional experience. Meeting every two weeks along with disabled activists and professionals, YouSmile participants include disabled and non-disabled children with experience of institutions. Their discussions, experience and learnings will feed into UNICEF's work.

CHILDREN'S FORUM GOES ONLINE

The fourth annual All-Ukrainian Forum of the National Council of Children and Youth went online in 2020 – and was the biggest event yet. Opened by the Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and broadcast on YouTube, the event – which we helped to organise – gathered 42,400 viewers. Among the speakers sharing their views on how to improve the lives of children in Ukraine were children and young people with experience of residential institutions and with special educational needs. The Ombudsman for Children's Rights was also in attendance.

"YOUNG PEOPLE ARE SO IMPORTANT TO SOCIETY BECAUSE THEY ARE THE FUTURE, THEY ARE THE ENERGY. THEY'RE GOING TO BE RUNNING THE WORLD SOON."

JEROME, YOUTH ADVOCATE



POWERFUL EVIDENCE

There's a compelling case to end institutional care of children, with some 300 research studies showing the long-term harm it causes. But gaps remain in the global evidence base. Capturing and deploying new evidence is an essential part of our work to drive change and fulfil our ultimate ambition for all children to grow up in happy, healthy, loving families.

Our dedicated evidence experts focused on three priorities in 2020:



Working through our **innovative demonstration** programmes to support the design of evidence-based services, capturing how care transformation can be successfully achieved across diverse systems and contexts, and sharing knowledge with other countries.



Improving **outcomes for children** by embedding pilot outcomes studies in our work, and collaborating with world-leading researchers to build the evidence on the benefits of families over institutions.



Generating evidence for **prevention and advocacy**, investigating the drivers of institutionalisation and opportunities to prevent it; and promoting data on the scale, harms and costs of institutionalisation as a lever for reform.



RESEARCHING BOARDING SCHOOLS IN COLOMBIA

In Colombia, boarding schools are seen as a solution to provide education for children in remote and rural areas – but this limits children's ability to access their right to family life. In 2020, we gathered and analysed data from 45 of the 47 boarding schools in the Guaviare region to understand more about these schools and their students. This has provided valuable evidence which Lumos, the Ministry of Education and others can use to plan improvements in the system, so that children's rights and wellbeing can be upheld.

EXPOSING CRACKS IN THE SYSTEM

Our *Cracks in the System* report – the first of its kind – explored the relationship between

institutionalisation and trafficking in Europe. Dr Petya Nestorova, Executive Secretary of the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings, called it "a vital addition to the evidence base and our collective understanding of how child trafficking manifests in diverse contexts." In 2021, we'll be building on this research by publishing a global review of the links between children's institutions and human trafficking in diverse contexts.

RESEARCH IN THE LANCET

We supported the publication of three new papers in *The Lancet* that shed new light on the situation of children living in institutions – including a paper we commissioned on the global scale of institutionalisation, which estimated that 5.4 million children live in institutions. In June 2020,

the Lancet Commission on Institutionalisation and Deinstitutionalisation, which we helped to convene, published work on the harms of institutionalisation and actions needed at global, national and local levels to achieve effective reform.

FAMILY-BASED CARE FOR UNACCOMPANIED REFUGEE CHILDREN

In Ethiopia, we worked in four refugee camps to reduce the over-reliance on institutions by strengthening foster care as an alternative. In 2020, we conducted an evaluation of the project, which involved interviews and focus groups with staff, children, foster carers and others, and documenting what we've learnt. Unaccompanied refugee children often end up in institutions; we're aiming to change that by providing evidence showing that it's possible to find caring families for all children, even in the most challenging settings.



GLOBAL RESEARCH STUDIES SHOW THE LONG-TERM HARM OF INSTITUTIONS TO CHILDREN



Constantina – an advocacy specialist – has been working for Lumos since February 2018, working with partners to help us push forward the agenda for deinstitutionalisation and positive reform in Greece



Constantina Kintoni reflects on the impact Lumos has had in Greece – and her own experience of adopting her daughter from an institution.

When I was 18 years old, I started volunteering at an institution for children with disabilities. This is where I met the girl who later became my daughter. We connected instantly. I was very young, I didn't have any maternal instincts kicking in. I just wanted her to be out of there.

I asked my parents to adopt her, but in the end, it was me who took care of her. In the beginning, I was a foster carer then later I adopted her with my partner.

Meeting her changed the path of my life. She opened up a window on a world I didn't know existed. The world for children with disabilities and for children in institutions. I had adopted her, but there were still 98 children there. I could not take them all – and that wasn't the point – but I wanted to give something back.

You can't do much as a volunteer in an institution. I was determined to do things differently and fight so that children wouldn't be in this institution in the first place. We started a small organisation including advocacy but also direct work with children in institutions and their families and potential foster carers.

Later, I went into politics, and eventually became a special adviser to the minister of social affairs in 2015. This was when Lumos started working in Greece. Although there were some amazing local organisations and professionals already fighting for change, we didn't have many Greek organisations advocating for childcare reform. A few focused on elements of deinstitutionalisation like foster care, but we weren't really seeing a holistic picture.

When Lumos started work in Greece, it was a breath of fresh air. Lumos could give the bigger picture – that reform was happening in other countries – and outline the steps needed to get you there. Lumos brought its international experience and lessons learnt about what worked best in different contexts to walk us through the process. It gave us a common feeling, of belonging to a mission. Lumos gave us hope that – although this is difficult – it's definitely possible.

I started working for Lumos in February 2018, doing advocacy work to push forward the agenda for deinstitutionalisation. As a catalyst, Lumos has done excellent work. Today, you have everybody advocating for deinstitutionalisation in Greece. In 2015, you'd never have heard a minister in parliament talking about the harms of institutions. Now you hear government officials openly talking about deinstitutionalization - and I truly believe we can take a great deal of credit for this.

When I met my daughter, she was on a feeding tube. She wouldn't speak, she couldn't walk. Nobody believed that she would develop. Today, she's a vocal advocate for deinstitutionalisation and for her friends who were left behind. To see her giving an interview, getting her message across so clearly and with so much passion, I could not be more proud of the woman she has become. She's a burst of sunshine. **Every child deserves that chance to shine.**

©Chloé Fuchs Kintoni

CHANGING PERSPECTIVES IN GREECE

“LUMOS GAVE US HOPE THAT,
ALTHOUGH THIS IS DIFFICULT,
IT'S DEFINITELY POSSIBLE.”

CONSTANTINA, GREECE

ADVOCACY AND CAMPAIGNS

All over the world, care systems are being transformed. The EU, the UN, individual countries and other organisations have made major commitments to reforming state-run child care systems and closing down institutions. But despite progress, barriers remain. So do many of the reasons children end up in institutions in the first place – from poverty and discrimination to forced displacement and child trafficking.

The COVID-19 pandemic brought new challenges – but we continued to fight for every child's right to a family, using our influence to catalyse change in policies, practices and funding. Throughout 2020, we focused on:



Targeted advocacy and campaigning to make care transformation a priority, put in place supportive policies and guidance, and direct resources away from institutions towards family and community-based services.



Thought leadership to equip and inspire partners with knowledge and insight to embark on reform.



Child and youth participation – developing meaningful ways for children and young people to influence decisions that affect them, including exploring ways they can be involved in Lumos' decision-making.

Radi [name changed] poses in front of one of the murals that presides over the centre for minors in Ceuta. Radi, who is from Guinea, was 15 when he travelled more than 5,000 kilometres, crossing four countries



91

IN 2020, WE CARRIED OUT OR PARTICIPATED IN 91 ADVOCACY INITIATIVES FOR CARE REFORM

TEN YEARS OF PROGRESS IN THE EU

In January 2020, we co-organised a high-level conference alongside the European Commission, celebrating 10 years of the European Expert Group on the Transition from Institutional to Community-based Care, of which Lumos is a founding member. EU officials, civil society representatives including Lumos interim CEO Sir Roger Singleton, self-advocates and others took stock of what the EU has achieved over the past 10 years and planned next steps towards ensuring that all children and adults can exercise their right to family care and independent living.

RETHINKING CARE FOR REFUGEES

Refugee and migrant children in Europe are often excluded from national alternative care systems, meaning unaccompanied children are missing out on suitable family- or community-based care and risk harmful institutionalisation. This is an issue we highlighted in 2020 with a research report, *Rethinking Care*, in partnership with the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), the United Nations

International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) and the International Organisation for Migration (IOM). As our first major piece of research on refugee and migrant children, it has helped us form new partnerships and push for reform.

CLOSING CZECH BABY HOMES

The Czech Republic is violating children's rights by keeping infants in institutions, according to a judgement this year by the European Committee of Social Rights of the Council of Europe. The committee's decision drew heavily on evidence from Lumos, and should finally put an end to so-called "baby homes" – an issue we've highlighted in the media and in parliament. Although our work has helped reduce the number of institutionalised children under three years old, in 2020 some 265 infants remained in institutions in the country. We're working to support the transformation of these institutions and the assessment of children to find suitable alternative family care.

ANTI-TRAFFICKING AWARENESS IN HAITI

We've continued to raise awareness of child trafficking and its links with orphanages in Haiti. During the 16 days of activism to end gender-based violence in late 2020, Lumos country director Eugene Guillaume participated in a talk on human trafficking broadcast on Facebook. Around Children's Day in June, we helped launch a poster campaign with the government's child protection agency IBESR. And as part of the Building Enduring Systems to End Trafficking (BEST) project, funded by USAID, we also conducted a knowledge, attitudes and practices survey to help guide our anti-trafficking strategy.

SCHOOL INCLUSION IN MOLDOVA

Children with severe disabilities will be able to go to mainstream schools in Moldova – and to stay with their families – after the national education authorities approved the model of educational inclusion that we developed. In 2016, we began piloting inclusive education units for children with severe disabilities and complex needs who would otherwise be excluded from school and sent to specialised institutions. Now they have officially become part of the education system and will be rolled out across the country – giving more children a chance to fulfil their potential.

Grace provides advocacy, technical and in-person advice to help prevent neglect and abandonment, and support parents through the pandemic and change the lives of vulnerable children



Meet Grace. From her early work to keep children off the streets in Kenya, to her determination to stand up for struggling mothers and prevent baby abandonment, she is a shining example of the caring force that drives our work.

Families want to care for their children. But for some unsupported and desperate parents, placing their baby in an institution may feel like their only choice. Many aren't aware that institutions harm children and affect their emotional and physical development.

Thanks to you, Grace's tireless work as a family-based care specialist in Kenya is helping to create a more informed and caring environment for over 2,000 mothers every year – through parenting sessions with local maternity services, parenting support groups, family celebration days and community outreach. It's part of our early preventative approach to stop family separation.

By focusing on family strengthening and support with Pumwani maternity hospital over the last seven years, Grace has seen the number of babies abandoned at the hospital significantly reduce.

Grace explains: "There is huge potential within families and communities. When we gather with parents we've been working with on our family celebration days, we give them space to interact, to give feedback, and receive a practical gift. Despite limited resources, they've been working hard to meet their children's needs. It's the first time someone has celebrated their efforts."

Last year, the family celebration day still went ahead, although the number of families involved was carefully managed. It provided a much-needed chance for parents to gather together and discuss how they were coping in challenging circumstances – and offered a much-needed break from the pressures of lockdown.

With your help, Grace wants to scale up similar support networks across Kenya and grow a community volunteer and mentorship programme to help more families. She's also keen to support more teenage mothers, who require additional services.

"I want to say thank you to our supporters. You've made a difference to the life of a child, by believing that all children can grow up in a loving and safe family. Because all children should be loved. They should feel like a child and have a sense of belonging."

THE GIFT OF FAMILY

"I WANT TO SAY THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS. YOU'VE MADE A DIFFERENCE TO THE LIFE OF A CHILD."

GRACE, LUMOS KENYA

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INNOVATIVE DEMONSTRATION



At Lumos, we're demonstrating how to keep children and their families together in a wide variety of contexts all over the world. From our demonstration programmes in Moldova, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Ukraine, Haiti and Colombia, and projects we support in Kenya and Russia, we're identifying and documenting innovative ways to transform care systems. By showing and sharing what we learn, we can make change happen on a larger scale, and transfer knowledge, experience and evidence to other countries and contexts.

In 2020, we had to adapt our work significantly due to the pandemic – but we remained focused on demonstrating that reform is still possible in this new context. Within our demonstration programmes, we're providing technical advice and building the capacity of governments, local authorities, NGOs and professionals to transform care systems, and pushing to get the necessary legislation and support in place, to ensure the rights of all children to grow and thrive in families and communities.

Looking ahead, we aim to move on from those countries where high-quality transformation is safely and irreversibly under way, and to launch innovative demonstration projects in new contexts where care reform is most needed.

A MILESTONE IN COLOMBIA

Fundamor, an institution for children with HIV, became the first institution in Colombia to begin shifting to a community-based care model with our support in 2017 – and in 2020, it finally completed the process. Between January and March, the last 44 children and young people moved out of the institution to live with their biological families, independently, in foster care or another appropriate care setting. Fundamor now focuses on providing ongoing support to children with HIV and their families.

STRENGTHENING FOSTER CARE

We've been promoting foster homes as an alternative to institutions across Colombia, and we strengthened this work by running four virtual training sessions for 59 professionals with the Colombian Family Welfare Institute ICBF. Our partner Key Assets, the Canadian fostering agency, shared their experience in recruiting and monitoring foster families, and an expert psychologist gave a talk on building the resilience of foster families. We also gave our input into national guidelines for foster homes, with ICBF accepting our recommendations.

SMALL HOMES, BIG PROGRESS

In Pardubice county in the Czech Republic, we've been helping dismantle large institutions and set up smaller group homes where children can receive the personal care they need to thrive. Three of the five county-run institutions, which used to house up to 40 children each, have now been successfully transformed. Children have been moved into small family groups of up to six, and independent apartment have been created for older care leavers. We've also been strengthening community services and supporting foster carers in the region.

EARLY INTERVENTION IN THE COMMUNITY

To ensure young children and their families can get the support they need close to home, we're piloting a holistic early intervention approach with Moldova's ministry of health and social protection. We opened the first early intervention centre in Floresti, providing services to families with children under five who have developmental disorders, including disabilities, or who may be at risk of developing them. Along with the centre, we've opened four early intervention offices at the community level. Now we're working with the government to extend and replicate these services across Moldova.

CLOSING INSTITUTIONS IN MOLDOVA

Another residential institution in Găgăuzia, Moldova closed in September 2020, the culmination of two years of work with families, communities, local authorities and services, and staff from the institution. Over that time, we successfully helped reintegrate 47 children with their biological families, after they had been placed in the Congaz residential institution because of physical and learning disabilities or family vulnerability. The process also included training and support for all 29 Congaz employees to help manage the transition, as well as work to strengthen community services.



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WE HELPED

233 STAKEHOLDERS

LEARN ABOUT CARE

TRANSFORMATION

BEST PRACTICES

THROUGH VIRTUAL

STUDY VISITS

Thanks to the efforts of Lumos and Michin Foundation, Felipe and his siblings were able to return home. We've been working closely with Michin to move away from providing residential care to reuniting families like Felipe's and giving them the support they need to stay together.



"I was a little problematic before," admits 18-year-old Felipe. "I was disobedient. I help my dad now, and I help my brothers in what I can. I used to dress ugly, like those criminals out there. I look better now."

Felipe lives with his dad, two brothers, two sisters, his grandma, three dogs and two cats in a house in the hills that surround Bogotá, Colombia. There's a lot of love and laughter in their home now, says his sister Rosa: "We are all very close."

But it hasn't always been so easy. With their mother in prison and their dad hard at work, the kids had some behaviour problems. In 2018, with their father struggling to cope, Felipe and his younger siblings were taken into the care of Michin Foundation, a residential institution.

The children's basic needs were met, but what was missing was a family. "I really needed to be with my dad and my sister," says his sister Rosa. "Sometimes I felt alone."

Felipe agrees. "Practically they gave us everything, but the thing we needed was the love and affection of someone who loved us," he says. "We could have psychologists, social workers, classmates, teachers... but we didn't have the love of a dad, which was what we needed."

A little over a year later, the siblings got what they needed: they returned to their family home, thanks to the work of Lumos and Michin. As part of our mission to end the institutionalisation of children in Colombia, we've been working with Michin to transition away from an institutional care model to providing support for children within family settings.

A psychologist and social worker have been helping the children to readjust to life at home. "They have taught us to be very tolerant and to focus on school," says Rosa. "When we have a problem, we immediately tell them and they help us with everything."

"They always make us smile," adds José, their youngest brother. "They helped us become better people and improve our behaviour."

The pandemic brought new challenges. Their dad lost his job, and the social worker and psychologist couldn't visit. Luckily, we were still able to step in and support the family. Last year, we helped provide emergency food packages and financial support for other essential items, and a tablet so the children can continue to speak to their social worker and keep up with their studies.

The children agree that the greatest strength of their family is the bond between them: they like to spend time together playing, cooking or walking the dogs. "Like every family, we have problems," says Felipe, "but what unites us is love."

UNITED IN LOVE

"LIKE EVERY FAMILY, WE HAVE PROBLEMS. BUT WHAT UNITES US IS LOVE."

FELIPE, COLOMBIA

CHANGING THE SYSTEM

We want to transform the way children are cared for all over the world – but changing whole systems isn't something we can do alone. To catalyse change, we seek out and work with a wide range of partners across different regions, sectors and thematic areas.

Throughout 2020, we focused on:

Providing targeted guidance and expertise to partners leading care reform through our **remote support and technical assistance programmes**. This includes advising a number of government and NGO partners who are championing care reform in their own contexts. In 2020, our remote support programmes included Ethiopia, Jordan, Malaysia, Panama, Russia, and Ukraine.

Leveraging our international experience, creating a range of training resources, tools, and learning exchange opportunities to **build capacity and expertise** of high-level stakeholders across the globe. This includes training and advising government departments, NGOs, institutions, social workers and other professionals involved in the process of care reform.

Cultivating **strategic partnerships and alliances** to collaborate, share learning and shape global care reform efforts. In 2020, we strengthened partnerships across Latin America and the Caribbean, Asia, Africa and the Middle East and helped drive forward strategic initiatives and networks to achieve change at scale.

With training, guidance and funding from Lumos, Fundamor in Colombia embarked on a process of transforming care – striving at all times to ensure each child's best interests were met.



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OUR REMOTE SUPPORT PROGRAMMES TRAINED
871 STAKEHOLDERS
IN THE SKILLS NEEDED TO TRANSFORM CARE SYSTEMS



TRANSFORMING CARE IN PANAMA

We successfully completed the first phase of a programme to transform care in Panama, where more than 1,500 children and young people currently live in institutions. In partnership with the National Secretariat for Children, Adolescents and the Family (SENNIAF) and UNICEF, we developed a national action plan on transforming care and helped build national capacity to deliver it. Work continued despite the pandemic – we delivered remote training for strategic partners in Panama, provided virtual technical advice to protection system officials, and jointly developed tools and documents to inform and guide the care reform process.

SUPPORTING REFUGEES IN ETHIOPIA

Working with partners on the ground in four refugee camps in Ethiopia, we managed to place high numbers of unaccompanied children into foster families – despite the challenges of the pandemic. To prevent the spread of COVID-19, it was important to switch to remote ways of

raising awareness and carrying out monitoring, but work continued placing children in families and recruiting new foster carers, with appropriate social distancing and health measures in place. Social workers in the camps were also trained and supported to promote COVID prevention, including through weekly phone calls to unaccompanied children and their caregivers.

TRAINING AND COLLABORATION IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN

We're seeking to influence child protection policies in all 33 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean through our partnership with the Inter-American Children's Institute (IIN), the specialised children's rights agency of the Organization of American States (OAS). Together, we're developing an online training course on transforming care, tailored to the region's diverse contexts. OAS is one of the most influential actors in Latin America and the Caribbean, so it's a great opportunity to influence and guide care reform in the region.

SHAPING REFORM IN JORDAN

COVID-19 poses a threat to people with disabilities living in institutions – and a challenge to deinstitutionalisation work in Jordan. But by working with the government and NI-CO, we achieved a lot in 2020. This included advising the newly established deinstitutionalisation unit and developing tools and resources to support local care reform. Other successes included designing and delivering an awareness raising programme through a combination of face-to-face and remote training – with local Jordanian experts running sessions in person.

FIGHTING FOR CHILDREN'S RIGHTS

As part of the Global Movement for Children – a coalition of organisations focused on fighting for children's rights in Latin America and the Caribbean – we responded to the pandemic in the LAC region, working with partners to advocate for the rights of children to live in a family and prevent the loss of parental care. We helped to develop, review and disseminate technical guidelines to promote the protection of families disproportionately affected by the pandemic.

Country Director of Lumos Bulgaria, Bisser uses his vast knowledge and experience to help us transform a system that has historically seen institutions as the universal solution to children's problems.



A DECADE OF PROGRESS IN BULGARIA

“BY DEVELOPING OUR ABILITY TO WORK THROUGH PARTNERS, WE’RE REACHING EVEN MORE CHILDREN.”

BISSER, BULGARIA

Lumos’ country director in Bulgaria, Bisser Spirov, reflects on the things we’ve achieved together.

I’ve been working for Lumos for more than 10 years, and I’m so proud of what we’ve achieved in Bulgaria during that time. Institutionalisation is harmful and transforming the childcare system to provide quality services for children and families, especially for the most vulnerable, is not only possible but also mandatory in a modern, civilised society.

One area that has really made a difference is assessing the wants and needs of the family as well as children. When Bulgarian authorities first began the process of moving children out of institutions, we insisted that it was extremely important to visit their families. Despite sceptical predictions that families wouldn’t be found or wouldn’t want to participate, 1,388 families were interviewed, and more than half were adamant in their desire to restore and maintain contact with their children.

Another success that stands out is our work with children with untreated hydrocephalus, a brain condition. Many families can’t afford the standard treatment, called a shunt, and often these parents were persuaded that it would be better to place their child in an institution. We provided funds for shunts for seven children so they could stay with their families. And following our awareness-raising activities, the costs are now covered by the authorities: more than 1,000 children have received this life-changing treatment, and their parents have not had to face the dilemma of where to find money to buy medical supplies.

But I am most proud of a small, single case: a boy with very complex needs – profound multiple disabilities combined with serious health problems – who was in a critical condition in a home for children with disabilities. He’s now been living in a foster family for five years. The Lumos team not only supported the boy and his foster mother, but also did everything possible to promote this unprecedented case in Bulgaria to make it clear that children with complex needs and profound disabilities can also live in a family.

In 2020 we quickly reorganised our work to respond to the COVID-19 crisis. We reached out to vulnerable children and families, while at the same time supporting NGO service providers to promote their work more effectively so they can reach more people online in these unparalleled times. By developing our ability to work through partners, we’re reaching even more children.

I believe that soon the last old-type institution for children in Bulgaria will be closed. But deinstitutionalisation doesn’t end with the closure of specialised institutions. All of our work to change local and national policies aims to make sure that the voices of vulnerable children are heard, their individual needs are recognised and met, and families receive the support they need to care for them in the best possible way.

FIND OUT MORE AT [WEARELUMOS.ORG/BULGARIA](https://wearelumos.org/bulgaria)

“DURING THE PANDEMIC,
WE’VE BEEN ABLE
TO SUPPORT REUNITED
FAMILIES AND HELP
STRENGTHEN THEIR
ABILITY TO KEEP
THEIR CHILDREN
SAFE AND HAPPY.”

TESSICA, LUMOS HAITI

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to a safe and loving family

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