

Helping Orphaned Teens Beat the Statistics

The prospect for Russia's orphans is frighteningly dim. Buckner International told *Mission Network News* that 10 percent of orphans who graduate from the orphanage system commit suicide within three years. Many others end up involved with drugs, prostitution and other crimes.

Sasha joined an Operation Mobilization team that works with at-risk children and youth in Russia last fall. A former drug addict himself, Sasha feels that he can connect to many of Russia's youth, especially their orphans.

Recently, Operation Mobilization was able to start working with a vocational school for orphaned teens. According to statistics, most of them will go on to be sent to prison, die from narcotics, or become homeless and die from disease or alcohol. Only 40 percent are likely to go on to live normal lives with a family and employment.

Passionate to see these statistics moved around, Sasha told the director of a vocational school that Operation Mobilization staff wanted to influence the students there for good. "We told him that we were willing and able to spend time with these children and by our example show them that there were better values in life. Of course, we told him we are Christians; but even so, the administration responded positively, which in our country rarely happens," Sasha says.

Since then, much progress has been made. The Operation Mobilization team wowed a psychologist from the school, who said he was amazed at how open the students were with the team and how respectfully they had been treating everyone. "They talked about them more than I have ever heard, even though it's my job," says the psychologist.

Most importantly, the Operation Mobilization staff has been able to convey God's love to the would-be hopeless students. Almost all of the kids have a suspended sentence, have been tried in court, and have even beaten their own teachers; yet, God is opening their hearts to the Operation Mobilization staff and their message.

Pray that these at-risk students would defy statistics. Pray that they would not only turn away from drugs and crime, but that they would truly come to know and understand the redemption their Savior has for them.