



PROGRAM FOR  
HUMANITARIAN AID

# PHA is “Being Family”

As I have mentioned in the previous articles – often we think that there is nothing worse than being a true orphan. I also was sharing my observations of how hard it is becoming a young adult for the orphans, because having a family (a unit that an orphan couldn't possess) that supports you is a huge thing in life – when you're studying, getting married, having kids – we always have our relatives somewhere next to us and that is a huge blessing. That's real unconditional support and love no matter what kind of decisions we're making as kids, teenagers and young adults. PHA's motto is 'Being family' – easy to say and understand but so challenging. My heart aches because not only true orphans do not have families; there are also the kids, who are 'orphans' with living parents. I want to share some words from a letter of a kid that stays in one of the PHA family homes.

“One morning I was asked: why I decided to live with you (Belokonnin family)? – I never say that everybody except me is at fault for my bad mood and bad things happening in my life. I can be only resentful towards all my relatives. I'm not used to feeling needed by somebody. I always think that nobody wants me. I was the happiest one when I started living with you because I felt that care and comfort and love. I understand that you're totally different people, not like the ones that surrounded me before.

From my early childhood by the age of 6 I forgot what mom's love looks like, I wasn't in contact with dad then. Mom's boyfriend appeared in our life then and everything changed. I remember him giving mom a choice when I was in the 2nd grade: for mom to choose whether she will be with me or with him. I was crying so hard when they gathered my clothes and sent me to mom's friend. My mom gave me to another family and I lived there for about 5 months, and I didn't know how, where, or what my mother was doing, she didn't call or visit me. Then one day she came and took me with her, I was on cloud nine, my mom came back and I didn't even want to ask why she left me.

I stayed with her and her boyfriend for 2 weeks. But then they packed my stuff and we went outside. Of course, I was asking where we are going and why they needed my clothes. Mom

said that they packed them because I won't wear them anymore. I trusted them and we left. They said they'll go check at the school about my documents and whether I can go back to study there. I realized they wouldn't come back. I was yelling because they left me and crying for a long time. After this, I started stuttering. Later it went away.



I lived with grandma despite the freezing cold in the house. She stayed with me and didn't send me to the orphanage. She had put me in school and I was studying ok thanks to her. She worked 3 jobs to cover my additional classes in English and for me to have clothes to wear. Lots of money was spent on the school. Sometimes we were starving. I remember we were eating the leftover honey and nuts.

I didn't care about any of that then, the main thing was that I was at home and not in the orphanage. No matter how angry she got or fights we had I love her the most. Then I had to go to the orphanage. At that time grandma couldn't have taken me, she was arranging her personal life, only sometimes she would bring me products. After mom's second time leaving me I taught myself to be strong and grew up on my own”.

What is this about in your understanding? Betrayal, refusal, treason? What is this in the understanding of a little kid and could it ever be healed?

**-Tanya Ilmeyerova,  
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