

## **FAIR PLAY WORKS AGAINST PLACING RUSSIAN CHILDREN IN ORPHANAGES**

Kalikå soft toys and dolls are hand made by parents of children with functional disabilities. Through project "Fair Play", mothers can stay home and care for their children and at the same time support themselves. This provides an alternative to having to place the child in an orphanage.

Although Russia is undergoing change, it hasn't yet succeeded in eradicating all traces of old fashioned attitudes from the Soviet era. In particular the stigma attached to functionally disabled children, deeply rooted in all levels of Russian society.

Even now, it is common for a mother of a new born to be advised to give up her child at the smallest suspicion of disability. Saint Petersburg alone has today over 8,000 children in orphanages and Russia as a whole has 800,000.

To develop support for functionally disabled children and their families, Professor Ludmilla Chistovich and her daughter Elena Kozhevnikova founded an independent institute in the early 1990's, Saint Petersburg's Early Intervention Institute. The Institute provides specialized training for staff as well as providing help for the children and their families. Through professor Chistovich's contacts in Sweden a Swedish support group was formed.

The Institute has developed to become an important center for higher education and research not only in St. Petersburg but also in other regions in Russia and neighboring countries. Lack of or insufficient funding has always been a deep concern for the Institute as has the insufficient economic support from the government been for families struggling to keep their children and care for them at home.

Kalikå came into contact with the Institute in 1996 and soon afterwards a joint project was started through support from SIDA, the Swedish governments' international aid agency. The primary goal is to provide a way for these parents to support themselves and their children and thus avoiding the need of orphanage placements.

Today, 60 women are sewing Kalikå toys in their homes. They meet regularly at the Institute to exchange their experiences of being parents with functionally disabled children as they deliver their finished work and collect more materials. The profits generated are shared with the Institute and are used 100% effectively in its work to increase support for functionally disabled children. Kalikå ship Swedish made pre cut material and all needed components to Saint Petersburg for making it possible for the mothers to sew the toys.

Many companies and toy manufacturers have chosen to work in countries with extremely low wages and substandard working conditions for their employees. Some of these companies ironically market their products through donations to charitable organizations in wealthy western countries.

Kalikå has chosen a different path. By establishing its' production in Russia it can support a local venture in accordance with all the basic concepts for fair trade policies.

More information at [www.eii.ru](http://www.eii.ru)

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