

A public awareness campaign to promote universal education in Romania

June - December 2009



A society's greatness is not to be measured by how well the strongest in its midst can do, but by how well it takes care of the weakest in its midst.

Parker Palmer, Quaker educator 2009

In June 2009 Ovidiu Rom launched “Școala te face mare”, a public awareness campaign designed to both (1) *inform* parents on how to solve problems related to their children’s access to education, and (2) *motivate* citizens to inform authorities about children who beg or work instead of going to school. With the slogan “*If you know a child who doesn’t go to school, call 116 111! Every child in school is everyone’s responsibility*”, the campaign promoted a free hotline manned by Asociația Telefonul Copilului as a tool to provide information and counseling to callers, and to collect data on obstacles to school enrollment and attendance, and regional statistics.

The campaign involved five Romanian public figures, two advertising agencies, a major film production company, multiple media outlets and corporations, government ministries and other NGOs, all of which donated time and/or services.

The “Școala te face mare” message reached Romanians through TV spots, press articles, and online promotion, as well as through the direct distribution of posters via mailings, events, and meetings.

Objectives and Outcomes

Objective 1: Inform parents regarding their role in their children’s education and offer them a toll-free number to request information and report problems they face in sending their children to school.

Objective 2: Make citizens aware of their legal rights and social responsibilities regarding education (e.g. to motivate citizens to get involved by reporting cases in their neighborhood in which children are not routinely in school).

1) Media coverage

Public Service Announcements, print ads and articles

Renowned film directors Cristian Mungiu and Radu Muntean, directed six public service announcements (PSAs) featuring Romanian public figures with high name and face recognition among both poor parents and the general public: Andreea Marin Banica (TV celebrity), Dana Deac (TVR director), Cabral Ibacka (actor and TV anchor), Dan Bittman (famous band leader), and Damian Draghici (Roma musician). Also featured was Narcisa Cumpana, a Roma mother who had returned to school, finished university and is now a kindergarten teacher in Bacau. (Her story can be found at www.ovid.ro) PSAs can be viewed at: <http://www.fiecarecopilinscoala.ro/acasa/news/>



All the major television companies except one agreed to air the six public service announcements. Space was obtained by Zenith Media and monitored by Alfa Cont. The spots ran a total of 7000 times on 25 channels: Acasa, Animal Planet, AXN, Alfa, B1TV, Cartoon Network, Discovery, Favorit TV, Hallmark, Kanal D, Minimax, Money Channel, Movies 25, MTV RO, N24 Plus, National, Prima, Pro Cinema, ProTV, Realitatea, Romantica, Sport.ro, TVR 1, TVR 2, TVR Cultural.

Antena 3 dedicated an hour-long program on 7 November that featured Ovidiu Rom and two of the schools where our programs are ongoing.

Link to “[Reporter special: Romania fara carte](http://85.9.12.243/a3/watch3.php?year=2009&month=11&day=7&show=reporter_special)”: *start at min. 5:40*

http://85.9.12.243/a3/watch3.php?year=2009&month=11&day=7&show=reporter_special

Three installments of a 10-part series of comic strips were designed to inform poor parents regarding their children’s rights to education and were published in *Libertatea* and *Evenimentul zilei*.



E-promotion

The campaign's website www.fiecarecopilinscoala.ro was viewed by **4,800 different visitors** between July and October and registered **18,000 page views**. In addition to hotline calls, OvR directly received approximately **50 e-mails and calls** from people inquiring about the campaign, offering to help, or reporting cases of children not going to school. A "cause page" on Facebook (*Fiecare Copil in Scoala* at www.facebook.com), registered **1,850 fans** and generated more than 200 comments. **7,000 contacts** received 7 newsletters, The "Scoala te face mare" e-banner was posted on the homepages of frequently viewed sites, such as www.carrefour.ro (over **450,000 views per month**), www.copii.ro (the official site of the National Authority for Family and Child Protection), and www.salvaticopiii.org. A posting about the campaign by Cabral received 115 comments.

2) Events and meetings

Press conference

The "Scoala te face mare" launch event on 15 June 2009 at the Cinema Pro movie house in Piata Universitatii, was attended by 100 people, including key government stakeholders: Luminita Anghel, Subsecretary of State at the National Agency for Child Protection, Oana Badea, Secretary of State in the Ministry of Education, and Corina Tara, representative of the Ministry of the Interior and Administration Reform.

Meeting with 200 comune mayors in Mamaia

On 3 August Maria Gheorgiu made a presentation at the Asociatia Comunelor conference in Mamaia attended by 200 **comuna** mayors. At the conclusion they voted unanimously to become official partners in "Scoala te face mare". Discussions in smaller groups made it clear that the local authorities are aware and concerned that many of their poorest children are currently not getting much of an education.

3) Direct mail

- **22,000 posters to ALL primary schools, kindergartens, and school inspectorates in the country, accompanied by a letter co-signed by our executive director, Maria Gheorghiu and the Ministry of Education's director for pre-university education, Liliana Preoteasa.**
- **6400 posters to all city halls and police sections**
- **200 posters in public buses in Bucharest** on high traffic routes
- **200 posters to Salvati Copiii** for distribution in the 14 counties where they work
- **42 posters to all County Child Protection Departments (DGASPC),**
- **22,000 wall calendar/planners** to ALL primary schools, kindergartens, and school inspectorates in the country and 6400 to police stations and city halls.

Objective 3: Collect data about problems citizens report.

Objective 4: Provide authorities with a list of problems reported to the hotline.

Asociatia Telefonul Copilului reported receiving **600 calls** directly linked to the campaign between June and September. Calls to the hotline came from all over the country, but the highest per capita calls were from Ilfov, Constanta, Prahova, Vaslui, Timis, Giurgiu, Bacau, and Bucharest's Sector 5. The majority of calls concerned children who had dropped out or "aged out" of the system and wanted to get back into school. According to Asociatia Telefonul Copilului's report many children who had abandoned school were reintegrated in school, and two schools from rural areas, which

were about to be closed following local decisions, stayed open for 16 students in Ichimenii Noi, Botosani county, and 70 students in Plesa village, Galati county.

134 calls were received from children who wanted to get back into school. The most commonly cited causes of school abandonment were: lack of financial resources, child labor, parents' separation, domestic violence, parents working abroad and children having gone abroad with their parents and then returning.

128 cases concerned first grade registration. The main issues were that the children hadn't gone to kindergarten or the school didn't have enough places.

114 calls came from parents who wanted to enroll their children in kindergarten, but they faced a lack of available places.

From individual cases to school principals and mayors seeking assistance, responses to the "Scoala te face mare" campaign continue to come in. The campaign spawned new partnerships with two economically struggling communities, Castelu and Medgidia, near Constanta, where many children were at high risk for abandoning school.

People got involved in a variety of ways: by visiting the campaign website or Facebook page, posting messages on blogs; distributing posters in their communities; attending stakeholder meetings and calls to the hotline. NGOs reported cases of children they wanted to help but did not know how, and expressed interest in participating in the campaign.

The single most glaring finding from the campaign is that there is a great number of middle-school age children who are out of the system and want (or need) to return to school. It was telling that 40 percent of such calls were made by the children themselves.

In 2010 Ovidiu Rom will produce:

- **Public Service Announcements featuring Andreea Esca, Horia Brenciu, Margareta Paslaru & Ethan Hawke**
- **Press conference on May 27 at Cinema Pro in Piata Universitatii**
- **Facebook page**
- **Website**
- **Campaign poster with sponsor logos mailed to 22,000 schools and 6400 city halls & police stations**



Partner Benefits

- **Association with high profile social campaign featuring Romanian public figures and an international celebrity**
- **Visibility at press conference on May 27 at Cinema Pro**
- **Logo & link on Facebook page**
- **Logo & link on Website**

- **Logo on campaign poster mailed to 22,000 schools and 6500 police stations and town halls**