



MOTHER2MOTHER PROJECT

By Romi's Way

Children need their mothers in order to grow healthy and to gain values that they need for their whole life. But mothers need support and empowerment too. Our Mo2Mo project provides a network for mamas to share, chat with mentors and peers and learn about family care, while exchanging our second-hand item-boxes and having a listening session with our compassionate mama-mentees. We advocate mother's role in the society by breaking barriers to support and reducing stigma towards vulnerable mothers in Portugal.

What is the specific issue?

Portugal, according to several studies conducted in the past 10 years comparing EU countries family care and support mechanisms, has one of the weakest support system for mothers in Europe¹. There is judgement, social exclusion and stigma that vulnerable mothers face on daily bases reflecting on economic status, relationship status, opportunities they can provide for their children and for themselves. These are felt at individual, family and structural levels in Portugal. Particularly damaging, is the often overlooked topic of stigma related to mothers with low-income, single status, ethnical background, or mothers who are survivors of rape, domestic violence or human trafficking is reflecting on how these mothers and their children are seen in society level, and how they are treated by the society. Stigmatised mothers and their children are often suffering from the effects of stigma for their whole life, while continuously feeling of less value or not good enough or included as equals to society

¹ Nata, G., Cadima, J. Parent- and Family-Focused Support in Portugal: Context and Analysis of Services/Programmes from an Equity Perspective. *Child Adolesc Soc Work J* **36**, 269–283 (2019). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10560-019-00613-y>

structures. Stigmatise mothers are feeling helpless and disempowered to raise above their vulnerability status without the society acknowledging their existence and needs and without active advocacy and promotion to offer vulnerable mothers opportunities to participate actively in the society, not just as receivers of aid, but by empowering them to have a role and equal opportunity to engage at various levels without their vulnerability status excluding them. Just provision of aid/ funds/ support is likely to increase their sense of helplessness and therefore one of the issues is the lack of mechanisms which would empower these mothers to find pathways to leverage themselves out of the vulnerability status.

Coimbra has a population of 106,000 and as a major city in Portugal, can be set an example where society recognises the value of all mothers and assigns particular support for vulnerable mothers trying to generate income, provide needs for children and often deal with trauma or abuse in a way that promotes social inclusion and equal access to opportunities.

What would Romis Way do to address the issue?

Our solution is to create a circle of giving and receiving applying for physical- and emotional support for vulnerable mothers while actively advocating policy level changes to see& hear& support vulnerable mothers in Portugal, aiming for permanent positive changes in the society and for these participating mothers and their children:

The project works through the following four actions:

- 1)** Collecting, combining and distributing age-appropriate item packages for children & families. These are delivered in exchange to receive back the out-grown items. All items are second-hand, including clothing, toys, books and other essential items.
- 2)** Mama-mentoring is a way to listen with compassion, allowing vulnerable mothers to be heard and communicate their struggles to another mother. These 'mamamentors' are trained volunteers who are not therapists, but mothers who care about wellbeing of other mothers.
- 3)** Networking through global network is a free channel for all vulnerable mothers to join in, and for supporting/mentoring/ advising mothers to join by paying a small membership fee. This network allows mothers to share, chat, learn and receive guidance from each other and from the supporting mama-members.
- 4)** Advocacy work to reduce stigma and prejudice towards vulnerable mothers and their children through a regional campaign in Coimbra with municipality, nurseries, social workers and health sector organisations (whom we have an MoU with)

Who are the beneficiaries and what are our targets?

During the first pilot year of the Mo2Mo project, we are aiming to target at least 150 vulnerable mothers and at least 200 children, with the ultimate goal of having these mothers as lasting members of our Mo2Mo network and global family of mothers. We will also train at least 20 mothers to become volunteer 'mamamentors'. The Mo2Mo network is ideally having at least 500 global members after the pilot year. Lastly, we are committed to serve the future-generation of mothers through advocating and mitigating structural stigma towards vulnerable mothers and creating pathways to ensure no mother would feel socially excluded in the future. With advocacy and digital awareness raising efforts in cooperation with Coimbra Municipality, Social Services and our NGO partners, we ensure no mother is left alone to feel helpless, less valued or not good enough in Portugal (target 10,000 viewers on social media platforms).

What are the funding needs?

The project pilot phase is a 12-month project aiming to have the network in place, having the item-circuit running and the trained volunteers for the 'Shoulders and Ears' visits actively working.

Total cost and financial need is 45,000Euros and it would allow us to:

- ✓ Support at least 150 mothers and at least 200 children in Coimbra region
- ✓ Have at least 20 Romi's Way volunteers trained to be 'Mo2Mo' volunteers visiting the mothers for 'shoulders and Ears' and item -circuit activities
- ✓ Collect, pack and distribute age-appropriate support package
- ✓ Establish the global Mo2Mo network platform for vulnerable mothers, mamamentors and global mother-members to learn, share and chat together
- ✓ Aim to have at least 90% of the supported mothers wanting to stay in the Mo2Mo network after the pilot year
- ✓ Run advocacy and awareness campaigns in the Coimbra region & in the social media platforms promoting the society wide benefits of empowering mothers, advocating against domestic violence, advocating on personal development & career opportunities for mothers to access, promoting diversity & inclusion of socially excluded mothers and children etc.
- ✓ Forming partnerships, working groups and dialogues with local and national authorities contributing to policy change, behavioural change and reduction of prejudice and stigma towards vulnerable mothers and their children
- ✓ Have 2 part-time staff members dedicated for the project deliver, monitoring, evaluation, reporting and accountability
- ✓ Conduct an audit and impact assessment at the end of the project year

Want to support us or get in touch?

We would be delighted to hear from you and warmly welcome all contributions towards this important initiative. If interested to fund the project fully or partially, please contact the CEO & Founder of Romi's Way Sari Bernardo via s.bernardo@romisway.org.

You may also donate via PayPal to info@romisway.org or via the DONATE button on our website www.romisway.net

Alternatively, bank transfers to Romi's Way account to IBAN: PT50004530344031186539369 with a SWIFT: CCCMPTPL are accepted, but please ensure you leave a note referring to Mo2Mo project and your contact details for us to get in touch (if you wish) with thanks and project updates.

