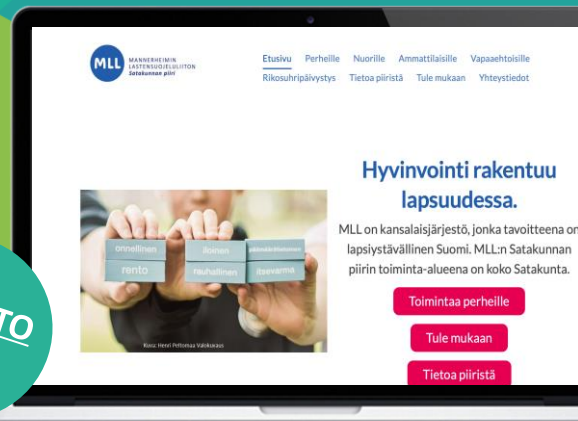


Ystäväksi maahanmuuttajaäidille (Friends for Immigrant Mothers)



ORGANIZATION*

MLL – the Mannerheim League for Child Welfare

COUNTRY AND CITY/IES

Finland, Satakunta among other municipalities

FIELD OF WORK

Social inclusion of immigrant mothers and their children in the community.

THE ACTION IS ADDRESSED TO (BENEFICIARIES)

Immigrant mothers as well as volunteers.

DESCRIPTION OF THE ACTIVITY

The aim is to promote and facilitate social networks and integration of immigrant women through professionally supported volunteering practices. Within the frames of the activity, Finnish speaking volunteers who want to become friends with immigrant mothers are sought. The volunteers are supported in the activity by being provided a short training. The coordinator of the action finds a suitable friend for the participants and is present in the first meeting. After this first meeting, the pair of friends decides between the two of them about the content of the meetings; what is essential is that the time spent together is ordinary and nice. Occasionally the Organisation of the action organises meetings and retreats for the volunteers as well as events where pairs of friends and their children can meet up.

MAIN GOALS

To promote social networks of immigrant mothers by professionally supported volunteers. To increase participation and inclusion, pleasant and meaningful activities, joy in the everyday life as well as tolerance.

TRANSFERABILITY

The programme or action is already organised in different parts of Finland and it can be transferred to other countries as long as funding is provided and there are volunteers who want to participate.

COOPERATION WITH STAKEHOLDERS

Guiding participants and collaboration in organising events; local actors who meet the target group in their work – for instance, the municipalities' social workers and the employees of the Organisations. In Satakunta the action is currently funded by STEA (Funding Centre for Social Welfare and Health Organisations) and the city of Pori. The programme/action is provided in the municipalities of Satakunta that have a partner agreement with the Mannerheim League of Child Welfare in the Satakunta district.

IMPACTS OF THE ACTIVITY

The programme has brought moments of joy and meaningful and pleasurable activities to the everyday life of both immigrant mothers and the volunteers. The programme has decreased experiences of loneliness among immigrant mothers and has also had a positive effect on the children. The majority has discussed issues related to parenting with their friend. By this it is assumed that the programme has also had a positive effect on the families of the immigrant mothers and the development of the children. Depending on the friendship, the volunteers have also supported integration by providing guidance related to the Finnish society and practical matters, participation in the local community and hobbies and activities outside of the home, seeking employment and supporting studies, etc. The roles of the volunteers vary but they are an important facilitator for and promoter of expanding the network and life of immigrant mothers.

SUSTAINABILITY (ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND INSTITUTIONAL SUSTAINABILITY)

The programme or action enables people to get to know each other in their local community, to enlarge their networks, and counteract loneliness. Passionate volunteers are the cornerstone of the programme/action, as is their will to meet new people and to get to know different lifestyles and ways of living. The action is based on volunteers who are ordinary people and not professionals. What is essential is the volunteer's role as someone walking side-by-side with the immigrant mothers.