



30 January 2009

Joint Working Group on Health and Related Social Issues (JWGHS):

Activity report for 2008, submitted by Co-Chairs Sweden (Ministry of Health and Social Affairs) and Arkhangelsk Region (Regional Health Administration)

New Co-Chairmanship for 2008-2009

The Joint Working Group practises a joint Chairmanship between a Nordic country and a Russian Barents Region. In January 2008 the Co-Chairmanship was transferred to Sweden and Arkhangelsk Region, after Norway and Murmansk. Co-Chairs were Ms. Kerstin Ödman, Senior Adviser, Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, Sweden, and Mr. Sergey Emmanuilov, Director and Head of the Arkhangelsk Regional Health Administration. On 1 December 2008 Mr. Andrei Krasilnikov succeeded Mr. Emmanuilov as Director of the Arkhangelsk Regional Health Administration and Co-Chair of the JWGHS.

Meetings of the JWGHS and its subgroups

The JWGHS has had two meetings, both of them in Arkhangelsk, on 27 March and 13 November, with participation from central and regional levels in Finland, Norway and Sweden and, from regional level, from Arkhangelsk, Murmansk and Komi. Also other participants have taken part at one of two meetings, such as the IBS, the CSO Chair, the WHO, the Nordic Council of Ministers.

The Steering Committee for the sub-programme on HIV/AIDS, chaired by Minister of Health of Murmansk Arkadij Rubin, had two meetings, one in Oslo and one in Syktyvkar, Komi.

A newly established Steering Committee on the sub-programme for cooperation on Children and Youth at Risk (see below) had two meetings, both of them in connection with the meetings of the JWGHS.

General about the Working Group and its activities

Members of the Working Group are Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia at both central government level and the Barents regions in all four countries. Also a representative of the Indigenous People's Working Group is member. The EU Commission, the World Health Organisation (WHO), the Nordic Council of Ministers and the Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Well-being take part in the work.

2008 was the first year of implementation of the new Co-operation Programme 2008-2011. The JWGHS worked in accordance with the programme. The scope and priorities of the programme are:

prevention and combat of communicable diseases, prevention of lifestyle-related health and social problems, and support to children and youth at risk, and development of primary healthcare, public health and social services.

Assessment of the situation as regards tuberculosis

The Declaration of the Prime Ministers, at their meeting at Kirkenes 2003, states that the Barents authorities are to gain full control of the tuberculosis situation in the region within 10 years, i.e. 2013. At its November meeting the JWGHS therefore made a mid-term assessment of the situation today.

TB expert and WHO representative Mr. Andrei Maryandyshev, Northern State Medical University, Arkhangelsk, presented a report showing that positive results had been achieved from the efforts in North West Russia on reducing new cases and using modern methods of cure. As an example, the number of new cases per 100 000 inhabitants in Arkhangelsk dropped from 73 in 2006 to 59 in 2007, compared to 82 and 83 in Russia as a whole.

Four emergent needs for the future cooperation were pointed out:

1. The threat of extensively-drug resistant (XDR) TB
2. The need of Molecular-genetic research
3. The need of a base of data on multi drug resistant TB in the Barents region
4. The strengthening of cooperation on services in the penitentiary institutions.

It was also suggested to set up a number goals for Barents cooperation on TB.

The JWGHS Co-Chairs were given the task to elaborate proposals based on his recommendations and proposals made in the discussion.

Establishment of a sub-programme on Children and Youth at Risk in the Barents Region (CYAR)

In accordance with the new co-operation programme on Health and Related Social Issues the JWGHS has adopted a new sub-programme on Children and Youth at Risk in the Barents Region (CYAR). This programme was elaborated during the previous Co-Chairmanship of Norway and Murmansk. The programme aims at strengthening the competence among the regional and local social administrations in the Barents Region to assist children and youth at risk.

A Steering Committee has been set up for the implementation of the programme. After quite lengthy initial difficulties Norway has taken on the responsibility to chair the Steering Committee, and Mr. Pål Christian Bergström, Senior Adviser, Regional Office for Children, Youth and family Affairs in Northern Norway, has been elected Chair. Co-Chair is Ms. Elena Viktorova, Deputy Chairman of the Committee for Labour and Social Development in Murmansk Region. One of the most important tasks of the Steering Committee is to find financing for the programme, and an investigation is going on concerning the possibilities to apply to the ENPI Kolarctic Programme or other funding opportunities for support.

In spite of the initial difficulties a few projects have started in connection with the programme:

With direct reference to the CYAR programme, Norway and Murmansk region signed a co-operation protocol for the period of 2008-2009, declaring their intentions to increase project partnership activities in accordance with the profile of the programme.

The first partnership to be elaborated is on the topic of rehabilitation of adolescents who commit crime. The Norwegian Ministry of Children and Equality and the Ministry of Justice and police have with the Governor of Murmansk and the FSIN penalty execution authorities agreed to establish a long-term project partnership on experience- and competence exchange starting in 2009. Special focus will be given to the topics of prevention of criminal behaviour, alternative forms of punishment, effective treatment programmes for youth with behavioural problems and successful re-integration to society through multi-sectoral co-operation.

Furthermore, a new project partnership agreement was made between the Ministry of Social development in Murmansk region and the Regional office for children-, youth and family affairs Northern Norway for the period of 2009-2010. The target group of the project is families who have children with disabilities, and the objective is to strengthen the parents' ability to provide good care for the child through a strong relationship between themselves.

Sub-programme on HIV/AIDS

This programme was first established in 2005 and then prolonged from 2008 – 2011. Chair is Mr. Arkadi Rubin, Minister of Health of Murmansk Region. Finland finances a programme coordinator.

The programme aims at reducing the spread of HIV/AIDS in the Barents region through multi-sectoral action. It aims at strengthening the national capacity to respond to the epidemic. The programme will contribute to the following overall objectives: 1) scaling up and accelerating the national response to HIV/AIDS to reduce the spread of HIV, 2) providing support to activities in the priority areas of prevention and mitigation of socio-economic impact at individual, household, and community levels. This programme aims at assisting the Russian National HIV/AIDS Programme truly multisectorally by mainstreaming HIV/AIDS control into the action plan of every Local Government Authority.

During the year a monitoring has been carried through. The most important findings of the monitoring is that great progress has taken place in Barents Region after the planning phase of the Programme (in 2004). AIDS Centres have become strong and professional, collaboration with other authorities has improved, the work gets support from higher levels. Sustainability of the HIV work seems good; institutional framework, funding, human and technical resources are in place. Recommendations of the monitoring expert include stronger input into prevention of HIV, capacity building in project planning and management and closer collaboration with TB activities. According to the monitoring expert the "Barents HIV/AIDS Programme has potential for a continuous source for new innovative approaches".

In the end of 2008, totally 18 projects were ongoing, 3 proposals reviewed and 9 projects completed within the Barents HIV/AIDS Programme, see enclosed list.

Development of the situation in the health care and social sectors/projects

One important aim of the co-operation programme is to improve co-ordination and improve transparency of the international cooperation going on in the Barents region in the fields of health and related social issues. At all its meetings the members of the JWGHS exchange information concerning projects in which they are involved. Still a great number of cooperation projects are going on, but a reduction in financial contributions from the Nordic countries, above all Sweden, has been carried through during the year. Finland has announced a reduction of its contributions.

Co-operation with the Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Well-being

The Barents Euro-Arctic Council is a Partner of the Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Well-being (NDPHS). The Chair of the JWGHS regularly informs the Committee of Senior Officials (CSO) of the activities of the JWGHS, and the Partnership is represented in the JWGHS. In 2008, Norway has been the NDPHS Chair and reported to the Working Group.

Database/webpage

During the year the contents of the Barents Health database has been transferred to the database of the Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Well-being (NDPHS), www.ndphs.org. In total this database contains a description of 391 projects in the Barents Region. It is still possible to find the information in www.barentshealth.org, but this information is not up-dated.

Planning for 2009

The JWGHS plans for two meetings, the first meeting in Umeå, Sweden, on 5 May. The second meeting will take place in Arkhangelsk in November.

One important task for the JWGHS is to follow up the assessment made of the TB situation last year and strengthen the coordination and promote the cooperation in the field of TB. The Working Group will also follow the cooperation in the fields of HIV/AIDS and Children and Youth at Risk (CYAR). As usual the Joint Working Group will also generally follow the developments of the cooperation in the health and social fields.

The HIV/AIDS Steering Committee plans among other things to work on the implementation of the recommendations from monitoring of the Programme, organize a Capacity building workshop in programme/project planning, a combined study tour to Finland for representatives of two NW Russian regions and continued coordination of the Murmansk and Kantlahti LTSC project. The Steering Committee plans two meetings, the first one taking place in Luleå, Sweden, preliminarily on 15-17 April.

The Steering Committee for the programme on Children and Youth at Risk in the Barents region plans will give priority to finding out possibilities for financing of the programme. It will also if possible initiate different activities in order to get the implementation of the programme started. The Steering Committee plans two meetings, one in March in Komi and the second in November in Arkhangelsk.

Enclosure:

Project list of the Barents HIV/AIDS programme

Enclosure

List of projects of the Barents HIV/AIDS programme**Ongoing Finnish – Russian projects**

1. "Controlling the spread of HIV/AIDS in the Barents and Northern Dimension Partnership Programme Regions, phase II (2008-2010)". Coordination of the Barents HIV/AIDS Programme and support to EG on HIV/AIDS for the ND partnership. Coordination: National Institute for Health and Welfare, Finland, and Murmansk Regional Health Committee. Approximate budget – 600 000 EURO (3 years).
2. "Further Development of Low Threshold Services in Murmansk and Kantalahti" (2008-2010) Pilot project of the above mentioned programme. Coordination: National Institute for Health and Welfare (Finland) and Murmansk Regional AIDS Centre. Approximate budget 300 000 EURO (3 years).
3. "Prevention of HIV infection in the Republic of Karelia in 2007–2009". Coordination: National Institute for Health and Welfare, Finland, and Republican AIDS Centre Approximate budget 300 000 EURO (3 years).
4. "Strengthening of intersectoral action to fight drug abuse and drug related harm in Murmansk Region 2008–2009". Coordination: National Institute for Health and Welfare, Finland, and Murmansk Regional Anti-drug commission. Approximate budget: 178 000 €.

Ongoing Norwegian – Russian projects

5. "Cross action between STI Clinic in Archangelsk and Olafia Clinic in Oslo" (B504). Coordination: The Olafia Clinic, Norway. Approximate budget: 279 000 NOK.
6. "Only for you". The ConTact Bus- Murmansk Region (B606). Coordination: Norway and Murmansk Regional AIDS Centre. Approximate Budget 34 700 USD
7. "Youth education Program - HIV/AIDS and Drug Abuse - Murmansk region". Coordination: Norway. Approximate budget - NOK 549 779
8. "The Clinton HIV/AIDS initiative and Russia. Exchange of Russian and Norwegian clinicians". Coordination: Directorate for Health, Norway. Approximate budget - NOK 460 000
9. Education program for pedagogical personal and health specialists in the field of "Healthy lifestyle" and prevention of HIV/AIDS and drug addiction (B705). Murmansk Region. Coordination: Norwegian Church Aid. Approximate budget 257 000 NOK.
10. Youth peer education in Murmansk related to HIV, STI and communication skills (B710). Coordination: Pertinax Group, Norway. Approximate budget 207 000 NOK.
11. "Love your neighbor". Arkhangelsk region. Coordination: Norway. Approximate Budget 330 000 NOK
12. Assistance in development of palliative aid in Archangelsk Region 2007. Coordination: Norwegian Church Aid and NGO RAssvet. Approximate budget 214 000 NOK.
13. "Vera". Development of international network of interaction between organisations dealing with women and adolescents, involved in commercial sex business and trafficking victims. Coordination: NGO Stellit, Russia (Pro Sentret, Norway). Approximate budget: 549 000 NOK..
14. "HIV: to be aware means to live". Coordination: Norwegian Church Aid and NGO RAssvet, Archangelsk Region. Approximate budget: 250 000 NOK.
15. Youth peer education in Archangelsk related to HIV, STI and communication skills. Coordination: Pertinax Group, Norway, three partners in Archangelsk Region. Budget 207 000 NOK.
16. Research project "Governance of HIV/AIDS prevention in North-West Russian" Coordination: Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research. An additional component of the project is financed by Finland

17. Educational project "New view". Coordination: Norwegian Sami Mission and "New Beginning", Murmansk Region. Grant 250 000 NOK in 2008

Ongoing Swedish – Russian project

18. "HIV/STI and Drug preventive efforts in Murmansk, Archangelsk and Karelia". Coordination: Sweden - Noaks Ark Barents. Approximate budget – SEK 980 000

List of projects under consideration

1. "Prevention of HIV infection among young people through advocacy, support, development of policies and actions in Murmansk region". Coordination: Norway. Project proposal
2. Enhancing HIV/AIDS reporting in the Republic of Karelia through training of media professionals. Applied from Finland
3. TB/HIV collaboration in Murmansk. Applied from Finland
4. Training of Russian police officers on injecting drug use and HIV in Murmansk, International Centre for Migration and Health in Switzerland. Coordination: Norway, Project proposal

List of completed projects

1. "Controlling the spread of HIV/AIDS in the Barents and Northern Dimension Partnership Programme Regions in 2005–2007" Coordination of the Barents HIV/AIDS Programme and support to EG on HIV/AIDS for the ND partnership. Coordination: STAKES, Finland. Approximate budget EUR 715,000 (3 years). Financier: Finnish Government.
2. Development of Low Threshold Support Centre in Murmansk region". Pilot project of the above mentioned programme. Coordination: STAKES, Finland. Budget EUR 247,905. Financier: Finland.
3. "Workshop of workers in LTC sites for IDUs". Coordination: National Public Health Institute, Finland. Approximate budget EUR 20,000. Financier: Finland.
4. "AIDS Alarm in North-West Russia". Coordination: Norway. Approximate budget NOK 151,000. Financier: Norway.
5. "Sexual and reproductive Health of Adolescents in Northwestern Russia" Coordination: Sweden, RFSU. Approximate budget SEK 16,091,000 (1997–2007).
6. "Activate patients at Murmansk Municipal HIV/AIDS Centre". Coordination: Norway and Murmansk AIDS Centre. Approximate budget NOK 16,000. Financier: Norway
7. "The Bus" for Republican AIDS Centre, Petrozavodsk. Approximate budget NOK 250,000. Financier: Norway (Humanitarian Fund of Crown Prince Haakon and Crown Princess Mette-Marit).
8. "The ConTact Bus – Arkhangelsk Region". Coordination: Norway. Approximate Budget: NOK 280,000 (Continues with financing by the Archangelsk Region)
9. "Territory of Life. Mobile unit work for prevention of HIV in Murmansk Region" Coordination: Norwegian Institute of Public Health. Approximate budget NOK 270,000. Financier: Norway