

**EG on SIHLWA
Fourth Meeting
Helsinki, Finland
29 – 30 May 2007**

Reference	SIHLWA 4/5/1/Info 1
Title	Discussion on project preparation for “Children at Risk”
Submitted by	SIHLWA Coordinating Chairman
Summary / Note	<p>NCM has requested SIHLWA ADO sub-group to continue discussion on “Children at Risk”. Since the SIHLWA 3rd meeting in Vilnius, where this topic also was on the agenda, the CBSS Expert Group on “children at Risk” has become an affiliated member of the NDPHS.</p> <p>The attached abstract of the SIHLWA 3rd meeting (Vilnius) summarises our discussion there.</p> <p>CBSS “Children at Risk EG Chairman Lars Lööf provides further information</p>
Requested action	Substantial ideas for the elaboration of “Children at Risk” project idea in collaboration with CBSS EG and with possible funding from NCM

ANNEX 1: NCM background paper (Oslo, Dec. 2006)

ANNEX 2: Abstract attached from SIHLWA 3rd meeting report (ADO-sub-group):

NORTHERN DIMENSION PARTNERSHIP
MEETING OSLO 11-12 DECEMBER.

Store Strandstræde 18
DK-1255 København K
Tel +45 3396 0200
Fax +45 3396 0202
www.norden.org

ANNEX I

8. December 2006

Til

Kopi

Fra

Emne

Northern Dimension Partnership on Public Health and Social Wellbeing

Invitation for joint project on the project "Promotion of Healthy and Socially Rewarding Lifestyles through prevention and social assistance targeting youth and children at risk"

Partnership and financing

This project will be implemented within the frame of the Northern Dimension Partnership as a pilot model project implemented in St. Petersburg and Kaliningrad.

NCM will finance the project with up to 2 mio. DKK under the condition that others are willing to contribute – also financially. In particular it is necessary that EU funding will be on place in order to establish a real partnership. NMC invites all partners to join and develop the project.

The purpose of the project is:

1. Developing of an **early intervention model** targeting children in especially difficult circumstances (CEDC) addressing needs related to their health and social wellbeing.
2. Developing **best practice models** based on knowledge and practical experiences from participating countries and other relevant sources though i.e. regional conferences and networking among participating government agencies, international bodies and NGOs.
3. Implement a **pilot project in St. Petersburg and Kaliningrad** through which the early intervention models are being developed and tested at a local level in communities. This model will be developed ready for replication in the participating countries – including training materials.
4. **Raising awareness of specific needs of the CEDC group** among government departments, including social- and health personnel - and NGOs.

The proposed project encompasses an integrated approach, including specific preventive measures that will protect children and youth "at risk" and that will support their health and social development.

Health is defined as a complete physical, mental and social wellbeing of children and youth. The term "Children and youth" is covering the age span of 0 to 20 years of age.

Target areas are:

Children in especially difficult circumstances. These include among others:

- children and young people from abusive families,
- families with drinking and alcohol problems,
- impoverished families and single parents,
- children who are neglected by their families,
- children who are not completely out of parental or state custody but spend most of their time on the streets, families,
- handicapped children,
- working children
- school drop-outs

The project will in particular focus on health, physical and social development related to the group of CEDC. They are in general facing a range of problems i.e. psychological problems, depression and suicidal feelings. There may be use of cigarette, alcohol, glue and other substances. In some instances substance use is an entry point to sexual exploitation and prostitution and consequently they are facing risk for sexually transmitted diseases, etc.

The CEDC are vulnerable and do not know how to protect themselves. This project will focus on methodologies on empowerment of the CEDC in order to enable them to reduce risk taken behaviour such as use of substance abuse, malnutrition, sexually transmitted diseases

The goal of the project will be actualized though the three core strategies, namely:

1. Strengthening capacity of government agencies to plan, organise and implement preventive and social assistance services.
2. Enhance coordinating mechanism to foster cooperation between governmental and non-governmental institutions across sectors including social, gender, health, and education and law-enforcement issues.
3. Capacity building of government agencies and officials dealing with the CEDC area - a cross sectors, to carry out preventive measures

The primary target groups for the project are:

Government departments and officials a cross sectors including health; education; social service and police - and NGOs

Activities will be focused on inputs related to:

1. Establishment of counselling centres at local level in the districts where the target group lives in order to provide easy access to family and youth friendly social services and counselling, including a 24h telephone hot line for children.
2. Counselling and establishment of crisis centres for women and their children

3. Initiating activities to improve the situation for children with disabilities and their families.

Dissemination of information, awareness raising and collaboration

- This project will develop collaborative linkage and networking among participating government agencies, international organisations and NGOs through conferences on best practices and preliminary findings of the project for the participating countries. Regional conferences can be held in selected countries.
- A final conference in which the result of the project will be presented.

Some further remarks on the site for the pilot project.

Social problems among vulnerable groups such as children and youth at risk are increasing in Russia; consequently the number of children placed at institutions is increasing too, including disabled children.

Additionally the health situation (mentally and physical) of young people is critical. A major challenge is therefore to be able to reach the group at risk through youth and family friendly services.

First phase of the project will geographically focus on St. Petersburg City Administration, which is in the process of the development of decentralized social services with special attention on social vulnerable groups and their needs. This also involves coordination between institutions and authorities at district level and close collaboration with non-governmental organisations providing social services.

Related activities

The project will be closely related to the Nordic Council of Ministers Co-operation Program for Children and Youth with Disabilities in Northwest Russia and the Baltic Countries from April 2006. This programme is a 3-year programme, 2006-2008, with the purpose to initiate activities to improve the situation for children with disabilities and their families. Focus will be on:

- i) Developing an offer on local level, which will make it possible for children with disabilities to remain living at home with their parents
- ii) Improving the quality of services in the present institutions
- iii) Decreasing the number of large institutions.

Nordic Co-operation on Disability – NSH – is the secretariat for the co-operation program. NSH is also representing the Nordic Council of Ministers in the European Council Ad Hoc Group of Experts on Community Living (Deinstitutionalisation) of Children with Disabilities.

Projects within the co-operation programme mentioned above will be co-ordinated with present activities in order to identify possible areas of cooperation. This will improve the capacity of presenting qualified service for disabled persons in St. Petersburg and Kaliningrad.

ANNEX 2: Abstract attached from SIHLWA 3rd meeting report (ADO-sub-group):

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4.3.2 Brainstorming on “CHILDREN AT RISK” (NCM)

For general introduction the group received a document prepared by NCM Maria Pia de Palo listing the overall aim, immediate objectives, main components, background and related activities.

Project title: “Promotion of Healthy and socially Rewarding Lifestyles through Prevention and social assistance Targeting Youth and Children at Risk”

This is a pilot project to be implemented in St. Petersburg and Kaliningrad.

The overall aim is to strengthen preventive and social assistance programmes targeting children and youth – and their families, and further to establish a cross sectorial cooperation between government authorities and non-governmental social services in order to develop a more de-centralised social service at district level placed in the local environment.

Background

Social problems among vulnerable groups such as children and youth at risk are increasing in Russia. Consequently, the number of children placed in institutions is also increasing, including disabled children.

Additionally, the health situation (mentally and physically) of young people is critical. A major challenge is therefore to be able to reach the group at risk through youth and family friendly services.

The project will focus on the development of best practice models based on experience from Nordic countries and Russia, in order to initiate innovative approaches on prevention and cross-sectorial activities.

First part of the project will geographically focus on St. Petersburg City Administration, which is in the process of development of decentralized social services with special attention on social vulnerable groups and their needs. This also involves coordination between institutions and authorities at district level and close collaboration with NGOs providing social services.

Immediate objectives

1. Strengthening the **capacity of oblast/city administration** to plan, organise and implement preventive and social assistance services.
2. Establishment of coordinating mechanisms to foster cooperation between governmental and non-governmental institutions and to strengthen an integrated approach including social, gender, health, education, law-enforcement issues.
3. Transfer of good practices models from the Nordic countries and Russia – including capacity building of authorities and staff in contact with the target group.

Main components

- Establishment of **counselling centres** at local level in the districts where the target group lives in order to provide easy access to family and youth friendly social services and counselling.
- Counselling and establishment of **crisis centres** for women and their children.
- Initiating activities to improve the situation for **children with disabilities** and their families.

Related activities

The project will be closely linked to the NCM cooperation program for Children and Youth with disabilities in NW-Russia and the Baltic countries from April 2006. This is a 3-year program (2006-2008), with the purpose to initiate activities to improve the situation for children with disabilities and their families. The focus will be on:

- Developing an offer on local level, which will make it possible for children with disabilities to remain living at home with their parents;
- Improving the quality of services in the present institutions
- Decreasing the number of large institutions;

Nordic Co-operation on Disability –NSH (Nordic School of Public Health / Gothenburg – Sweden) is the secretariat for the cooperation program. NSH is also representing the Nordic Council of Ministers in the European Council ad hoc Group on Experts on Community Living (Deinstitutionalization) of Children with disabilities.

Projects within the cooperation program mentioned above will be coordinated with present activities in order to identify possible areas of cooperation. This will improve the capacity of providing qualified service for disabled persons in St. Petersburg and in Kaliningrad.

Additionally we used a paper prepared by Mikko Vienonen listing potential problems, objectives, target issues, potential activities, potential pilot-regions, potential official partners, potential partners in the NGO and organizational sector and the society at large. The purpose of these documents was to act as stimulators for thought.

CHILDREN AT RISK (briefing by Mikko Vienonen)

Problems:

- parents' alcohol or narcotic problem
- children left without proper physical or mental or emotional support
- poverty (lack of basic needs)
- handicapped children (physical and/or mental)
- children with learning difficulties
- HIV+
- unwanted children
- children who are physically mishandled
- children who are sexually mishandled
- children's & adolescent's own alcohol or narcotic or sniffing problem
- smoking children
- street children
- children who are bullied in school
- etc ...

Objectives:

- provide a sheltered place for mothers and children under vulnerable circumstance
- provide social and psychological counseling
- improve social support (financial & mental to children in the street)
- provide/ improve 24 h telephone hotlines for children to ask and approach social and health professionals
- improve health and social sector professionals understanding of the problem of children at risk, and improve their skills to identify the problem.
- improve media understanding of the problem
- improve politicians understanding of the problem
- improve teachers understanding of the problem
- become more sensitive of the needs of children at risk (low threshold services)
- etc...

Target issues:

- child abuse (links with alcohol and other substance abuse)
- sexual abuse (links with prostitution and prevention of trafficking)
- Violence against women
- street children (links with prevention of trafficking and drugs and HIV/AIDS and STIs)
- working children (links with "workplace health & safety")
- bullying (links with suicide prevention)

Potential activities:

- Developing youth friendly low-threshold services/ activities
- Developing/upgrading counseling services
- Providing training to existing service providers
- Providing training and discussion forum for administrators and political decision makers
- Involvement of local media

Potential pilot-regions:

- St. Petersburg

- Kaliningrad
- Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania
- others?

Potential official partners:

- health sector (PHC, pediatric polyclinics & hospitals, narcology units, psychiatric care units)
- day-care services and schools
- social-workers/services
- police

Potential partners in the NGO and organizational sector, and society at large:

- youth clubs and groups
- national and international NGO
- international organizations (UNICEF, UNFPA, WHO, ILO, UNAIDS IOM)
- International support partners: Nordic School of Public Health/Gothenburg, Public Health Institutes in Nordic countries (Finland already involved and others will be consulted/requested to join)

During the discussion, following issues were brought up:

- The representative of CBSS (Lars Lööf) briefed about the focus of CBSS WG on Children at Risk. This group has been active in five areas: 1) prevention of sexual exploitation¹, 2) trafficking² (“ECPAT”), 3) rights of children in institutions³, [4) street children, and 5) criminality and self destructive behaviour]. Last two items have received less attention than the first three, which is only due to priority setting as resources have not been sufficient for everything. All work should focus on concrete, practical action for children’s improved wellbeing. Information about the Children at Risk WG is available on the Baltic Sea Region Child Centre (www.childcentre.info). 4-page Activity Plan July 2006 – June 2007 and a Report from the work of the WG for Cooperation on Children at Risk July 2005 – June 2006 was made available. According to the information, it seems that the CBSS WG for Cooperation on Children at Risk is mainly operational in organizing expert meetings, sharing information among professionals, preparing reviews and research on the topics, but less focusing in actual project work. The only mention about a project in their Activity Plan a project on training professionals from 9 countries to deal with trafficked children 2006- 2008.
- In the discussion about CBSS WG on Children at Risk the following issues were registered:
 - The 5 topics on CBSS WG agenda indeed represent the most dangerous risks for children. But they also represent problems far “down-stream”, and are not dealing with primary prevention before something really drastic has taken place. This is not to say that the priorities would be wrong, but if we want to be more pro-active “upstream” we should not forget more population based action in schools, kindergartens, etc.
 - An interesting issue to explore more could be the risk of internet for children. It was also mentioned that through internet societies can create support to children at risk through hot-lines, etc.
- The following other issues for looking into came up in the discussion about general public focused activities:

² Caring for victims (network of experts from 10 countries)

³ Conference held in Sweden in November 2006 (report will be published), children’s rights linked with human rights, how to monitor institutions, preparation of recommendations, cooperation to train staff about how to involve children in institutions themselves

- The major challenge is to identify the children at risk. There is a need for developing indicators and proper tools to tackle the problem. A monitoring system and training of professional in contact with children at risk is needed - i.e. targeting social workers, health personnel, school teachers, police, etc.
- Bullying in school is an issue that practically no class or school is immune to. reasonably good methodologies have been developed and tested for tackling the problem;
- Children living in families where parents have alcohol dependency problems are at risk. Helping kindergarten, school, social-workers etc. to identify and tackle the problem would be an important step forward.
- Collaboration between different sectors like kindergarten, school, police, social sector, work-place, health sector, etc. could be one important focus. Creating a networking model could be one project activity.
- Children, whose parents have left to other countries after work is one special group at risk. They often live with grandparents or other relatives.
- Developing early intervention and innovative prevention models across all countries within the Northern Dimension partnership are needed. Countries have different experiences in preventive work, but even that some countries have extensive preventive programmes they are still facing problems related to children living in especially difficult circumstances.
- It was mentioned, that for the project preparation we would need more background data, as to mapping the problem of children at risk in proposed project sites like St. Petersburg and/or Kaliningrad. We should first look for information available through the CBSS WG.
- In a similar manner, mapping evidence based interventions to overcome the risky situation of children, who find themselves in such situation.
- A useful partner to remember in Russia is UNFPA and UNICEF, which both have developed low threshold youth friendly services, especially to adolescent girls. They already have training modules in place, which have been tested in Russia (Moscow and in St. Petersburg)

It was concluded by the representative of NCM (Maria Pia de Palo) that the issue of a project on "Children at risk" will be raised at the meeting of CSR 11 December in Oslo. In order to continue the project preparation, we will need to have clear indication of interest from other partners as well such as the EU and/or other NDPHS partner countries, who are in the position to act as donors.