

Dear Reader,

in this letter you will find the latest project news from the International Development Collaboration at STAKES.

Newsletter is also available at our website at <http://idc.stakes.fi>

December 2006

News

Seasons Greetings!

For IDC at STAKES, 2006 has been a year full of challenges and interesting tasks: projects have been e.g. ongoing in Kaliningrad, Russia, in Bulgaria and in Namibia, while new projects have begun in Romania and Ukraine. Our collaboration with Republic of Karelia in the Russian Federation continues since early 1990's, with several new projects starting next year.

We have had the pleasure of hosting visits from our collaboration partners from every continent of the globe. Our staff have participated in various interesting international projects; some in countries very well-known to them, some as 'first-timers' in a new environment. We have had to say 'thank you and farewell' to dear and close colleagues like Zaza Tsereteli, Marina Wetzler and Julia Iljina, who moved on with their career.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our staff, our partners, and all the stakeholders for the good co-operation of the past year and wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

Looking forward to seeing you again in 2007!

Director Jutta Immanen-Pöyry

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Photo: Anne Rissanen

Töölönlahti Bay - in the heart of Helsinki

Mental illness is a major contribution to disability across the world

International Development Collaboration at STAKES has been participating in mental health reforms in Bulgaria, supporting the development toward de-institutionalization and establishing community based mental health services.

The EU Phare Twinning project "Facilitating the transition from institutionalized mental health care to a model of community psychiatry" was finalized at the end of September 2006. The twinning partners were, on the Bulgarian side, the Ministry of Health and the National Centre for Public Health Protection, and on the Finnish side, STAKES.

Bulgaria has taken numerous steps to harmonise its structures and systems with those of the European Union as part of its accession processes. Such processes are not always fast and easy as each country has its own specific culture and traditions. Changes cannot be realised in just a few years, and in some cases they even require decades. The health care system and especially the mental health care system cannot be and even must not be changed too fast. Too rapid changes may even worsen the life of people suffering from mental disorders.

In Bulgaria, the mental health care system is still dependant on hospitaliza-

tion of mentally ill patients in large institutions. However, in recent years more and more attention has been paid to develop alternative services for people suffering from mental disorders. As an evidence for those changes it could be mentioned for example the active role of the Bulgarian government and the health authorities in the work made in close collaboration within WHO, Council of Europe, Stability Pact for the South Eastern Europe and European Commission for developing the mental health care not only nationally but also internationally.

At the national level the Council of Ministers adopted the Mental Health Policy of Bulgaria and also the National Action Plan for implementation of the Mental Health Policy was adopted.

As a final result of the Bulgarian–Finnish Mental Health project the experts prepared a 'Master Plan' in which the main findings and recommendations were recorded.

In this Master Plan the importance of the collaboration between different actors was emphasized.



Photo: Anne-Marie Grouev A quiet corner in Sofia

This concerns especially the Ministries of Health, Labour and Social Policy, Education and Science, and also the Ministry of Finance. Without a flexible collaboration between all relevant stakeholders at all levels the successful transition from institutional-based care to community based services is not possible.

Assistant Professor Dr Vihra Milanova from the University Hospital "Alexandrovska" visited STAKES in November 2006. According to her there are many positive changes going on in the mental health sector in Bulgaria. The Ministry of Health is actively supporting the development process. Also new mental health centres will be established soon.

All positive changes will improve the life of mentally ill people. It also will support their families in difficult situations and avoid the stigmatisation of this disease or people suffering from it.

Finally, STAKES expert team welcomes Bulgaria to the European Union from the beginning of 2007.



From the left: Resident Twinning Advisor, Dr. Timo Tuori, Dr. Vihra Milanova and Mrs. Anne-Marie Grouev.

Text: Project manager, Anne-Marie Grouev, IDC at STAKES

The collaboration to combat HIV/AIDS in the Barents region moves forward

Barents HIV/AIDS Steering Committee meeting in Archangelsk

The Barents HIV/AIDS Programme was launched in February, 2005.

The Steering Committee of the Programme is chaired by Norway, with the Murmansk Oblast as co-chair. The main tasks of the Steering Committee are to promote the Barents HIV/AIDS Programme and its objectives, to monitor the ongoing projects of the Programme, and to evaluate new project proposals.

The fourth meeting of the Steering Committee was organised in Archangelsk at the beginning of November. Participants from Norway, Sweden, Finland, St. Petersburg, the Republic of Karelia, and from the Murmansk, Moscow and Archangelsk Oblasts were present.

Tatjana Smolskaya from the Northwest Regional AIDS Centre in St. Petersburg presented a comprehensive picture of the HIV situation and national activities to combat the epidemic in Russia. A peak in the epidemic was seen in 2001, with the number of new cases mostly decreasing thereafter. In 2005 and 2006, new increases can be seen in some regions, e.g. in Northwest Russia. Intravenous drug use is still the dominant transmission route, but sexual transmission is becoming more common. A worrying tendency is that the epidemic is spreading among women of reproductive age. In 2005, approximately 6300 new HIV cases were detected in Northwest Russia.

National and international initiatives to combat HIV/AIDS in Russia

Several measures have been taken at federal level to combat HIV/AIDS in Russia. National project "Health" has been launched, financing of especially treatment and diagnostics has been increased, also some financing for prevention measures has been earmarked. Drugs and diagnostic equipment are distributed to the regions. World Bank loan and Global Fund grants mean a significant addition in financing.

There are 14 projects ongoing as part of the Barents HIV/AIDS Programme. Financing for these projects is coming from Norway, Sweden and Finland. A progress report from the Murmansk Low Threshold Support Centre project was presented at the Steering Committee meeting, indicating that the Centre is becoming known among the target clients and that they are actively using its services. Some new initiatives on collaboration in training on prevention and in support for HIV positive women were described at the Steering Committee meeting. Sweden has started to phase out its support to Russia, but Norway indicated some increase in financing for next year.

HIV/AIDS in Russian legislation

In connection with the Steering Committee meeting, a round table discussion was held on legislation concerning HIV/

AIDS in the Russian Federation. Dr. Mihail Narkevich from Fond Zdorovje gave a presentation on the current situation. Current laws do not give support to harm reduction programmes, but specialists at the meeting were optimistic on this question. There was a lively discussion about the testing of HIV. Local specialists were seeking for more groups to be included in compulsory testing, because, in practice, tests are free for people only when they are compulsory. Finnish and Norwegian participants expressed the view that fewer groups need to have compulsory testing, and also that voluntary testing should be free for clients.

Change of Co-ordinator

For the past two years Zaza Tsereteli has been Co-ordinator of the Barents HIV/AIDS Programme. In November he leaves for a new job in the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in Kiev, Ukraine. A letter of gratitude from the governor of the Archangelsk Oblast was given to him (through STAKES).

Zaza Tsereteli has done great work for the Programme, initially establishing the basis of the programme through mapping the relevant issues together with Russian Barents Regions in their collaboration initiatives, as well as co-ordinating the activities of Norwegian, Swedish, and Finnish actors in the Regions. STAKES will continue the co-ordinating work of the Programme during 2007.

Text: Project manager Outi Karvonen, IDC at STAKES



From the left: the steering committee meeting participants, Harald Siem, Outi Karvonen, Mika Salminen, Anders Blaxhult and Arnt Uchermann.

Outi Karvonen starts as a new co-ordinator for the Barents HIV/AIDS Programme and the Northern Dimension HIV collaboration

Following the departure of Dr. Zaza Tsereteli, STAKES has now appointed a new Co-ordinator, Ms Outi Karvonen, to continue the work until the end of 2007.

The position carries the responsibility of co-ordinating the Barents HIV/AIDS Programme, serving as an international technical advisor to the Expert Group on HIV/AIDS as part of the EU Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Well-Being (NDPHS), as well as managing the Low-Threshold Support Centre project in Murmansk.

Ms Karvonen (MA) is a Project Manager from the International Development Collaboration at STAKES and has been working there since 1997. She has been responsible for projects in Northwest Russia. The projects have covered such themes as reducing infectious diseases (HIV, STI, tuberculosis, viral hepatitis and preventable by vaccines infections), school health education, developing primary health care and public health training and preventing social exclusion. She participated in the preparation phase of the Barents HIV/AIDS Programme, and

This girl enacts the tradition of welcoming guests with 'bread and salt'. From left to right: Arnt Uchermann and the new project co-ordinator for the Barents HIV/AIDS programme Ms Outi Karvonen.



has been working as an advisor for the Programme and the Murmansk project since 2005. In 2006 she has been preparing new applications for a project in the Republic of Karelia (on prevention of HIV) and also in the Leningrad Oblast (supporting HIV positive women).

Ms Karvonen finds the new task very challenging and interesting. She is looking forward to collaborating with the experienced specialists of the Expert Group on HIV/AIDS in the EU NDPHS and the Steering Committee of the Barents HIV/AIDS Programme.

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STAKES organizes a workshop on poverty

An "Aspects of poverty in Russia, the Baltic States and Finland" workshop was held at STAKES, Helsinki on September 8–9, funded by the Finnish Academy of Sciences.

Leading poverty researchers from five participating countries were invited to this small-scale workshop organised by the International Development Collaboration at STAKES. The guest participants included Dr Anastassia Alexandrova, (Institute of Urban Economics, Moscow) Dr Lilia Ovcharova (Independent Institute of Social Policy, Moscow) Dr Avo Trumm (Tartu University), Dr Ilze Trapenciere, (Institute of Sociology, Riga), Dr Romas Lazutka, (University of Vilnius) and Mr Vyacheslav Dykhanov, (Kaliningrad State University).

In addition lecturers included leading Finnish poverty researchers as well as Dr Tony Shorrocks, Head of UNU-WIDER (Helsinki).

The workshop addressed some key research topics relevant to poverty alleviation in the five participating countries. They included the concept of poverty, problems of poverty measurement, poverty and regional or spatial equality, as well as the concept of risk in poverty research. Dr Shorrocks, in his analysis, pointed out the need for a multidimensional approach



to the fuzzy phenomenon of poverty and also the importance of various definitions based on social exclusion, vulnerability, and capabilities. He also dealt with the

topics of dynamic analysis, micro simulation and decomposition analysis as well as the importance of assessing alternative policies for further development of poverty research.

- The conference proceedings will be published hopefully at

some point in the future, reports Dr. Simo Mannila of the IDC, one of the key workshop organisers.

Text: Communications officer, Anne Rissanen, IDC at STAKES

International Development Collaboration at STAKES

NEWS

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A new project begins in Romania

In November, STAKES launched an EU Phare Twinning Light project called "Assistance for monitoring the implementation of the Romanian Joint Inclusion Memorandum (JIM) by the Ministry of Labour, Social Solidarity and Family (MLSSF)".

The project will last six months. One of the outcomes of the project will be a draft proposal for further improvement of the institutional framework for implementing the JIM conclusions and for further development of social inclusion policies in Romania. This development process shall proceed in full consensus with the MLSSF.

We will also prepare a proposal for developing the MLSSF unit, which is responsible for the national monitoring and evaluation of the JIM implementation. There is a need to complement the capacities of the present staff especially in the area of methodology (in the collection and processing of data, the elaboration of periodic reports, indicators etc.).

Last but not least the project includes a training component. We will offer a varied set of training events during the period of the mission in Romania. A large conference



forms the centrepiece of the training component and indeed the entire project, and will take place in April 2007, when it is hoped that we will receive a speech from Minister Gheorghu Barbu.

The STAKES-project was warmly welcomed in Romania. The STAKES-team consists of six short-term experts from STAKES, the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health and the National Institute for Statistics: Simo Mannila D.Sc.Sociology (also Project Leader), Simo Kokko MD, Ulla Parviainen MA, Juho Saari PhD in Social Sciences, and Reijo Väärälä PhD in Social Sciences and Markku Lindqvist MSocSc. The Team Leader is Marjatta Vehkaoja (MA), who is an experienced civil servant in the public administration for social affairs and health and a former Member of the Finnish Parliament.

Text: Team Leader,
Ms Marjatta Vehkaoja, (MA).

Headmasters and teachers from St. Petersburg get acquainted with methods of early intervention

STAKES and NGO Stellit from St. Petersburg are implementing a project aimed at preventing social exclusion of children in schools by developing preventive methods for the use of teachers and other school staff.

The project is being run in co-operation with the Nevsky district and the St. Petersburg educational, social, health and police authorities, as well as with the staff of three pilot schools from Nevsky District.

The project "Prevention of Social Exclusion of Children and Youth at Risks in Schools in Nevsky District, St. Petersburg" started in 2005 with the financial support of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs of Finland. The project is to be completed in 2007.

The project has benefited from the results of the Finnish Early Intervention Project "VARPU" in particular from the networking methods developed by the STAKES Group 'Network Research and Methods Development'. For example, the "Zones of Worry" is a tool developed for evaluating a child's support needs by assessing the amount of subjective worry experienced by the professional that is in contact with the child. Once this has been assessed, the professional can choose the relevant method for tackling the situation. The "Zones of Worry" has been translated into Russian and along with other network-based multi-professional methods such as "Remembering the Future", it has been presented and demonstrated during training seminars in St. Petersburg.

The methods developed during the project will be integrated into the Contin-



ued Training programmes of the Methodological Centre of St. Petersburg, aimed at teachers and other school staff.

The Headmasters and teachers and other school staff from the 3 pilot schools carried out a study trip to Finland in October 2006. They visited among others Matinkylä school and became acquainted with the three-level prevention model developed and implemented by a regional network of the schools and social and youth workers.

Text: Project manager, Minna Sinkkonen
IDC at STAKES