

IREX/ASSISTANCE TO RUSSIAN ORPHANS (ARO) PROGRAM



Summary:

In February, ARO program activities continued, with program staff travelling to the regions for a number of monitoring visits and training seminars. The program was highlighted at an event at the British Embassy and program staff continued to cooperate with University of Alaska child welfare specialists. The program's implementing partner, NFPCC worked in close collaboration with the local governments to implement programs in the Republic of Buryatia and the Tomsk region. Through its core activities, ARO continues to work towards the prevention of child abandonment by providing social work professionals with effective skills, knowledge and resources.

Book Launch in St. Petersburg and Moscow Highlights the Importance of Early Relationships in a Child's Development



IREX's main implementing partner on the **USAID-funded Assistance to Russian Orphans Program (ARO)**, the National Foundation for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NFPCC), contributed to the development of a book called "Early Relationships and Child Development", recently launched in St. Petersburg and Moscow.

The book is a collection of expert authors and part of the joint project "Attachment in Young Children", financed by the European Commission. NFPCC coordinated the development, editing and publishing of the book, which was partly funded by USAID. In total, 2,500 copies of the book were published in early 2009 by NFPCC in the series "Preventing Children from Becoming Social Orphans". The book will be distributed to key professionals throughout Russia, including social workers, government authorities and child-oriented NGOs.

More than 150 representatives from academia, government agencies, international organizations, foundations and business took part in the two book launch events in St. Petersburg and Moscow. At the event, the British Embassy representative highlighted USAID's contribution to the book. Four of the authors: Stewart Britten, Christine Puckering, Svitostav Dovbnaya and Marina Morozova, presented every member of the audience with a copy of the book and discussed the book's most important findings. As part of the events, the audience viewed excerpts from the documentary film "Early Relationships and Child Development". ▶▶▶



The book focuses on the importance of stable relations with a person in the successful development of a child. The President of NFPCC, Marina Egorova, and the NFPCC's Scientific Consultant on Early Intervention, Dina Zelinskaya, also spoke at the events about the importance of the book for future NFPCC activities focusing on the development of early intervention for children aged 0-4 in Russian baby homes. Scientific Consultant on Early Intervention from NFPCC, Dina Zelinskaya, notes "The book is very relevant and useful for a wide range of professionals who work with young children so they understand what is happening with the child and are able to evaluate their observations. NFPCC's activities on the development of early intervention in baby homes are highly effective in the improvement of a child's development. The book is an important step in the field of early child development in Russia and will hopefully be used as a basis for future work in the area of social services

ARO Strengthens Partnership with the University of Alaska

ARO continues to build on the program's partnership with the University of Alaska in the development of new social work curricula at Tomsk State University. Specialists the University of Alaska at Anchorage School of Social Work came to Russia last year to provide support to the program. The partnership continues as the University of Alaska specialists are assisting Tomsk State University expand its social work curriculum and build the capacity of staff to educate students in the field of child welfare.

In total, five training courses have been prepared by the professors from the University of Alaska School of Social Work including: introduction to the child welfare system; alcohol abuse disorders; adoption and foster care; independent living skills for children in state care and understanding the spectrum of fetal alcoholic syndrome disorders. The program was translated into Russian and distributed by specialists to the Tomsk State University School of Social Work.

The specialists at Tomsk State University are currently working to incorporate their new training courses with the courses developed by the University of Alaska, in order to offer a comprehensive degree at the university. The courses include a variety of topics, from case management to working in rural regions to technologies of working with at-risk families. In April, the specialists from Alaska will return to Tomsk to supervise the implementation of the new curricula and provide trainings.

In addition to the work with the university, ARO facilitated a long-term cooperation agreement between the Family and Children's Affairs Department of Tomsk Oblast and the University of Alaska. Such cooperation will work to ensure that region continues to benefit from the expert knowledge from the United States.

Survival School in Novosibirsk

Specialists at School # 188 in Novosibirsk have a unique take on education in their school. There are no desks, no books and no pencils. Most of the time, there isn't even a roof over the students' heads. Welcome to "Survival School. Siberian Character", an ARO-funded project in Novosibirsk.

The Survival School was developed in 2008 with ARO funds and creates recreational activities for at-risk adolescents. The project aims to improve their social and communication skills by integrating them into groups with other children who exhibit particularly strong social skills and good behavior. The school brings together youth for team building exercises, games, sport activities, hikes, races and discussion groups, all aimed at building social skills, confidence and developing a sense of community and responsibility. The Survival School is unique in that there are no traditional lessons or sports classes. All of the activities are aimed at developing practical life skills such as hygiene, food preparation, making a fire, first aid, self-defense and survival in dangerous situations.

The project took a total of 14 teenagers between the ages of 11-14 years, including 6-7 with behavioral problems from disadvantaged families at risk of child abandonment. Individual and group meetings were lead by psychologists and guidance counselors who encouraged at-risk youth to participate in the project. These students were brought together from throughout Leninsky District of Novosibirsk city to learn practical life skills in a fun, interactive way.



Survival School: Siberian Nature in Novosibirsk



The results of the project are evident. The school counselors involved in the project have noted an increase in the students' confidence, social interaction and sense of responsibility. An instructor from Survival School, Dmitry Pacaj, noted "I believe that the Survival School principles, the approach to the teenagers and the skills learned have a practical character. The integrated education, mixing different groups of children and the practical use of skills develop confident attitudes built on the principles of cooperation and trust."

Prompted by the successful results of the pilot project, the Leninsky District Department of Education has decided to expand the Survival School model to other schools. They have created a position in the Department of Education that will be responsible for working with NFPC to replicate the Survival School model. The replication of the Survival School will provide students throughout the city with the opportunity to gain life skills and build their confidence outside of the classroom.

NFPC Participates in the First Coordination Council in the Republic of Buryatia

NFPC continued its cooperation with the Republic of Buryatia in February by taking part in the First Coordination Council. The aim of the meeting was to discuss the implementation of the decisions made by the first Coordination Council. The Coordination Council was established according to the order of the President to develop a system for the prevention of child abandonment. At the first meeting, they approved the establishment of three pilot sites in Muhorshibirsky, Zaegraevsky and Zheleznoforzheky District of Ulan-Ude city. The Coordination Council discussed the need to increase the number of people working within the Republic Agency for Family and Children's Issues and they together approved the beginning of work in the pilot sites. In spite of the difficult economic situation, the head of the districts were able to allocate specialists for work on the early intervention and they have already begun to work.

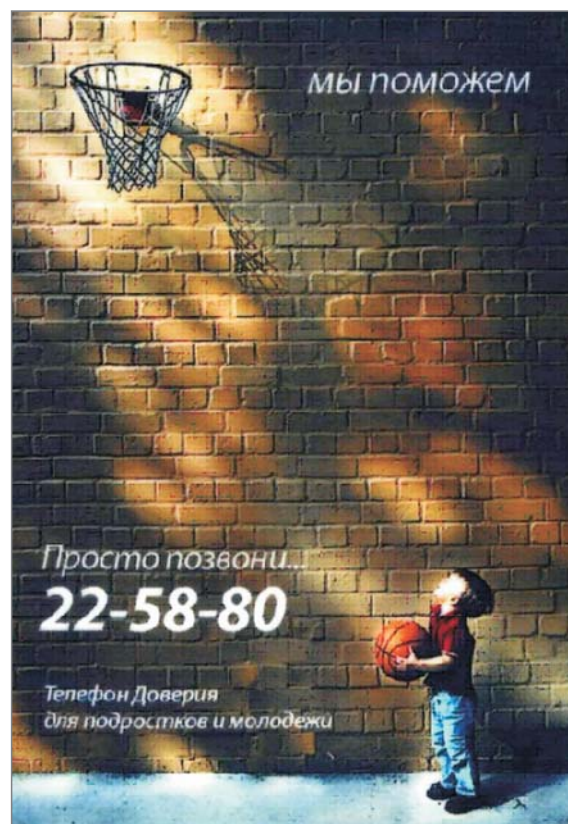
The impact of the project has already been recognized as Muhorshibirsky reported their specialists in the pilot regions had exposed five cases of child abuse as well as assisted one at-risk family with a newborn. The other two pilot sites have begun their work aimed at the prevention of social abandonment by using case management technology and creating Coordination Councils. The current project in Buryatia exemplifies the government's willingness to implement innovative ARO methods and prevent child abandonment.

NFPC Announces Winners of the Telephone Helpline Advertising Competition

In February, NFPC announced the winners of the nationwide competition among telephone helpline operators to find the best advertising campaign and informational materials. The competition was a partnership between ARO and the Dutch Embassy and open to municipal, government and NGOs that maintain telephone helplines serving children, teens and families. In total, 21 helpline services from 17 regions throughout Russia submitted their advertising materials. The applicants sent materials including posters, fliers, stickers, radio announcements and other outreach materials.

The overall winner of the competition was the telephone helpline "Gavrosh" from Moscow. Gavrosh was awarded 400 EUR by the Dutch Embassy to continue their advertising campaign. In addition, there were several winners in different categories including: Most Innovative Idea helplines from Saratov and Astrakhan; Wittiest/Most Clever helpline from Barnaul and Best Design helpline from Vladimir.

The winning helplines and nominees are posted on the website www.siroststvo.ru.



Nominee in the Helpline Advertising Competition



NFPCC Conducts Specialized Training for Orphan Leavers

From February 16-18, NFPCC conducted a seminar in Khabarovsk, bringing together over 30 education specialists, social educators and psychologists from city and regional vocational schools. The seminar focused on the creation of integrated systems of social adaptation for children who have aged out of the orphanage system. At the beginning of the training, many participants admitted the negative opinions they had of children who have been in orphanages. Overcoming this prejudice was a key success of the training as all of the participants demonstrated their willingness to work with this group. During the three days, they learned about the psychological state of such children as well as both the methods and technologies to assist them. The participants also learned how to develop programs aimed at social adaptation of the children and how to assess the effectiveness of their program. On the third day, a project seminar took place where the participants learned about how to implement projects targeted towards these youth.

As a result of the intensive training, the government decided to select two pilot sites (an orphanage and vocational school) where the social adaptation programs covered in the trainings could be tested. In these two sites, the participants from the training will be able to try out their new methodologies and skills learned from NFPCC experts. In addition, it was agreed between the participants and the government to create a database of children who have aged out of orphanages to ensure that they are properly taken care of within the state welfare system. A participant from the seminar, Ekaterina Selenina noted, “The real success of the seminar was that it generated the belief with the regional level directors that it is necessary to create a tracking system of tracking for orphan leavers in the vocational schools and colleges. Even more importantly, they saw real potential for construction of such a system in the region.”

Evaluation of USAID Child Welfare Programs

ARO Chief of Party Galina Karmanova and NFPCC President Marina Egorova accompanied Alexander Telyukov, the principal evaluator for the Assessment of USAID's Child Welfare Program in Russia during

his visit to Tomsk on February 2-5. They discussed the results of the regional and municipal models of the child abandonment prevention. The team met with a number of key officials including, the Deputy Governor of Tomsk region, specialists of the Department on Family and Children's Issues, Head of Administrations and social welfare specialists from Shegarsky, Zyryansky and Tomskiy districts, Director of Zyryansky orphanage, President of the Foundation “New Development”.

Upon return from her visit, ARO Chief of Party Galina Karmanova reflected on the work being done in the region. She noted, “ARO3 has effectively been using Tomsk Oblast as a platform from which to demonstrate and disseminate innovative child welfare practices to other regions of the Russian Federation interested in adopting new practices and setting up innovative ARO-developed services. Many actors in the social service sector should look at the innovative practices and the successes in Tomsk.”

Specialist Trainings for Dealing with Foster Children

From February 10-11, NFPCC conducted a series of trainings in Tambov focusing on the challenging attitudes of children in foster families. Specialists from the Center for the Development of Family-based Forms of Care for Orphaned and Abandoned Children, “Radi Budushchego” as well as foster care specialists from Tambov participated in the training and learned about the main behavioral problems associated with children in foster families and about methods to address these problems. They were given several case studies in the training and analyzed the cases in a group. As a result of the training, the participants have a greater understanding of the motives behind the behavior of the children, types of aggression and methods to manage such behavior.

Early Intervention in Barnaul

In early February, NFPCC experts held a number of seminars on early intervention in Barnaul. On February 3 and 4, an informational seminar took place focusing on inter-departmental cooperation on early intervention and work with families at risk of social abandonment in the Zheleznodorozhny district of the city of Barnaul. During the seminar, participants developed a deeper understanding



of early intervention, organizational challenges that occur during inter-departmental cooperation on early intervention services and other issues related to the implementation of such services.

In addition, NFPCC organized an educational seminar in Barnaul on the practical aspects of providing help for at-risk families based on the early intervention methodology. The seminar provided participants with theoretical and practical skills for working with families and children in crisis as well as working to effectively develop systems for interaction between departments providing services for prevention of social abandonment of children. During the seminar, participants developed criteria for case management and outlined functions for the management of such programs. They also analyzed case studies, looking into the participants' early intervention work and developed rehabilitation plans for their cases. In addition, the participants gained reporting and documentation skills in order to better manage their cases. The series of seminars provided specialists with new skills and increased their ability to assist children and families using early intervention technology.

News from Our Partner

From February 2-6, NFPCC conducted a seminar for telephone helpline consultants. The seminar was part of a joint project between ARO and the Matra/KAP project funded by the Dutch Embassy. The NFPCC expert provided detailed knowledge of several key tools for telephone helplines including: how to talk to callers, how to properly log calls, how to create statistics based on the calls as well as issues of anonymity. The expert conducted an analysis on past calls together with the group. As a result of the training, the helpline in Perm was opened and the participants had an improved system of quality control that included documentation, standards for activities and a system for supervision of specialist services.

In addition, NFPCC conducted an educational seminar for helpline supervisors in Moscow from February 13-15. The seminar aimed to properly train people who will serve as supervisors to helpline operators. During this training, the participants learned such key skills as: theories of supervision, tasks and forms of supervision, professional and personal skills required, how to supervise helpline operators, how to work with difficult cases, as well as how to prevent burnout and maintain a team atmosphere within the office. In total, specialists from 10 regions of Russia attended the training.

Upcoming Activities:

March 2-4 (Tomsk): Seminar on foster care for family support professionals

March 3-6 (Komsomolsk-on-Amur): Seminar on early identification and case management

March 9-14 (Krasnoyarsk): Seminar on early intervention

March 11-13 (Komsomolsk-on-Amur): Seminar on foster care for family support professionals

March 16-18 (Tambov): Seminar and supervision on early intervention for children with disabilities

March 18-19 (St. Petersburg): Monitoring visit HIV prevention projects

March 23-25 (Barnaul): Seminar and supervision visit on early intervention

March 23-27 (Novosibirsk and Kuybyshev): Seminars on life skills and post-orphanage support programs

March 30-31 (Tomsk): Conference on the implementation of family-based policy in social abandonment prevention: Siberian region experience

This bulletin is made possible by the generous support of the American people through the United States Agency for International Development (USAID). The contents are the responsibility of IREX and do not necessarily reflect the views of USAID or the United States Government.

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