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USAID Supports Child Helpline in Perm



Peremena Telephone Helpline Advertisement

February 1st marked the opening day of Perm's Child Helpline, "Peremena" (Change). The helpline is a joint project of the USAID-funded ARO program and the Matra/KAP grant from the Dutch Embassy. As a result of the hard work by the Perm regional government and ARO implementing partner, National Foundation for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NFPCC), children and teenagers in the Perm region now have access to free emergency psychological assistance 12 hours a day, 5 days a week.

The Child Helpline is the first step in the creation of a unified inter-departmental system for early identification of troubled families and the protection of children's rights in Perm region. In 2008, NFPCC began cooperation with the Perm city government to establish the Child Helpline. Over 5 months, NFPCC worked with the government to select and train qualified staff, organize the management of the helpline and provide assistance with an advertising campaign. "Peremena" was one of a number of potential names for the helpline put forth by the staff and government. In the end, a special survey was conducted and local children selected "Peremena". Although the helpline number is now 11 digits, the number will later be a simple 3 digit number like other emergency numbers. ▶▶▶

Summary:

During the month of March, the USAID-funded ARO program continued its activities to support the development of child welfare services in Russia. ARO main implementing partner, the National Foundation for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NFPCC), work in close cooperation with the local and national government to develop and implement new services aimed at decreasing child abandonment. NFPCC efforts were recognized by the Moscow city Department of Education. In addition, NFPCC continued to conduct specialized trainings on early intervention, foster family care and case management in the ARO target regions.



In the first two months of operation, “Peremena” has received a steady flow of calls and the experienced psychologists have been busy helping children, teenagers and parents from many cities throughout Perm region. Approximately half of all calls come from children and teenagers and the other half come from parents who are having troubles dealing with their children. Recently NFPC conducted a social audit of the helpline. The audit revealed a high level of quality and the helpline was accepted into the Association of Child Telephone Helplines.

In addition to the opening of “Peremena”, the Perm city government organized a round table discussion in March with key child welfare actors including the regional Minister for Social Welfare and Ombudsman for Children’s Rights. The aim of the roundtable was to discuss emergency social-psychological support to children and teenagers in crisis. NFPC President, Marina Egorova, gave a presentation on the organization of inter-departmental collaboration of psycho-social services for child abuse case management workers. During the round table, participants noted the urgency of addressing the problem of domestic violence and cruelty to children. They agreed that a system of coordinated emergency social-psychological support for children in crisis is needed. The round table concluded that a working group should be established to work on the system and develop a set of measures to prevent cruelty to children and provide support to children in crisis. The participants recommended that the measures be included in the Perm program “Children in the City”.

The work underway in Perm highlights the region’s commitment to assisting children in crisis. Within the framework of the USAID-funded ARO program, NFPC plans to continue assisting the region and will provide advice on the management of the helpline as well as measures to improve child welfare services in the region.

Vera Kozharskaya – Director of the Psychological-Medical Social Center in Perm:

Thanks a lot to NFPC for creating the telephone helpline and helping with each phase of work! Now people in the city and even in the region know of the helpline. It forces us to be more attentive and conduct work on a high level as we are responsible for supporting the children calling the telephone helpline. Our high level of professional work is possible because of the close cooperation between the city of Perm, the regional government and NFPC.

State Duma Family, Women and Children's Affairs Committee Highlights ARO Partner's Contribution to Child Abandonment Prevention in Tomsk Region

The ARO target region of Tomsk was the highlight of a recent special session of the Russian Federation State Duma Family, Women and Children's Affairs Committee. The special session took place on March 30th in Tomsk, a region that has been at the forefront of ARO's child abandonment prevention work funded by USAID. The special session, “Legislative Support for Social Abandonment Prevention and Foster Family Care in Tomsk Oblast” focused on the region's achievements.

Representatives from ARO key implementing partner, National Foundation for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NFPC), attended the State Duma session as the organization plays a key role in child welfare reform in Tomsk Oblast. Funded by USAID, ARO has worked in the region since 1999. Representatives of the State Duma and Russian Federation Ministry of Education and Science, as well as local officials presented reports at the meeting. In addition, to the presentation, the Committee members and experts visited the Social Rehabilitation Center “Luch”, Orphanage No. 4, Tomsk Hobby Center and Rehabilitation Center for Disabled Children and Youth “Nadezhda” to observe the social abandonment prevention activities in action.



Moderators of the State Duma Committee Session: Boris Maltsev, Speaker of Tomsk Oblast State Duma; Elena Mizulina, Chairwoman of the State Duma Family, Women and Children's Affairs Committee; Nadezhda Gerasimova, Vice-Speaker of the State Duma; Sergey Tochilin, First Deputy Governor of Tomsk Oblast.

In order to disseminate models and technologies developed in the framework of the ARO activities in the region, NFPC and the Tomsk Department of Family



and Children's Affairs published a collection of articles and legal documents for the meeting titled, "Implementation of State Family Policy in the Sphere of Social Abandonment Prevention: The Tomsk Oblast Experience." The publication included articles about the introduction of administrative mechanisms for social abandonment prevention, rehabilitation of at-risk families and children, assistance to foster families and social adaptation of orphanage graduates. The publication was supplemented by a CD containing a set of legal documents, a consolidation of the main mechanisms of a regional prevention system, as well as results of research conducted by the Center for Fiscal Policy titled, "Socio-Economic Consequences of Family and Childhood Social Protection Reform in Tomsk Oblast and Budget Expenses for its Implementation." The Chairwoman of the State Duma Committee, Ms. Elena Mizulina, underscored the importance of the publication and recommended its dissemination in other regions throughout Russia.

The State Duma representatives recognized the achievements within the Tomsk region child welfare system. As a result, Tomsk Oblast government officials provided a set of recommendations on how to improve child protection legislation and were invited to join the experts group in the State Duma Family, Women and Children's Affairs Committee. As members of the experts group, the Head of the Department of Family and Children Affairs of Tomsk Region, Ms. Lyudmila Eftimovich, and two Tomsk regional specialists will assist with the development of national laws related to child protection issues.

The selection of Tomsk for the State Duma Committee meeting brought national attention to the achievements in Tomsk region. Government officials and specialists in Tomsk will continue to contribute to child abandonment prevention at the national level as part of the experts group.



Chairwoman of the State Duma Family, Women and Children's Affairs Committee, Elena Mizulina, acknowledged the importance of Tomsk region's experience in establishing a social abandonment prevention system.

Moscow City Department of Education Recognizes NFPCC's Contribution to Early Childhood Development

Eight years ago, a new concept became part of the vocabulary used by child welfare specialists in Moscow. "Lekoteka" is formed from two words 'Leco', the Swedish word for 'toy' and 'theke', the Greek word for storage. In 2001, USAID-funded ARO partner, The National Foundation for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NFPCC) introduced Lekotekas and the technique has now become a standard in several Moscow preschools and throughout Russia.



A young girl participating in a Lekoteka positive development game in Konakovo Baby Home. Lekotekas utilize different types of psychological and pedagogical assistance.

The Lekoteka is an early intervention technique that makes it possible to identify potential risks of delayed development and to form essential skills among disabled children by providing them comprehensive psychological and pedagogical support. "Lekoteka" involves different types of psychological and pedagogical assistance to young children using therapeutic tools and development games. NFPCC established Lekotekas in several regions of Russia and in Moscow. Today, the Moscow Department of Education operates 80 Lekotekas based on the ARO model.

NFPCC's contribution to early childhood development in Lekotekas was officially recognized by the Moscow Department of Education in a conference focusing on Lekotekas on March 25th 2009. At the conference, Maria Tsapenko, the Deputy Head of the Preschool Education Division within



the Moscow Department of Education thanked NFPC, and its donor USAID, for their contribution to the development of the Russian Lekoteka. NFPC President, Marina Egorova made a presentation about the history of Lekotekas and the development of the model in Russia. She noted, "It is not common to trace the birth of new service from the moment of its origin to its phases of development including approval, methodical equipping and implementation in existing children support systems. We had such a rare opportunity with the Russian Lekoteka as this new type of child support service was developed eight years ago here in Moscow."

The Lekoteka was developed within the framework of ARO and began as a part of a psychological-medical support center in the north district of Moscow. Over time, the model was replicated in other children's institutions such as baby homes and children hospitals in the city and the Lekotekas received licenses from the Ministry of Education and Science of Russian Federation. Based on NFPC's experience,

the Lekoteka technique has shown concrete results including:

- Approximately 20% of children living in orphanages who receive this service are returned to their birth families or are adopted;
- The level of disability declines among children who receive this service;
- Approximately 15% of children who receive this service improve their academic performance, transferring out of orphanages for children with disabilities and into general orphanages;
- Approximately 20% of the children who receive this service no longer need constant medical assistance.

Such results in Russia have made Lekoteka a recognized technique in early childhood development. The successful replication of the ARO model has now become a standard in Moscow's early education system and there is support for further development throughout Russia.



Dima

Dima was 11 months old when he came to the baby home. He had been officially diagnosed as a disabled child as he didn't have proper motor or sensory skills, he wouldn't play with toys or even attempt to speak. Dima was filled with negative emotions and was very aggressive, crying every time his environment changed. Normally, such a diagnosis would result in Dima spending his early years in a baby home for disabled children, with very limited opportunities. However, Dima soon began Lekoteka classes and his condition improved drastically. At the Lekoteka, Dima was involved in physical activities as well developmental games and classes.

After two years in the Lekoteka, Dima developed into a completely different child. He became more social and could walk, run and even dance. His communication skills improved dramatically and he began to speak with adults as well as ask and answer questions. Dima even began taking care of the younger children at the baby home. As a result of his improvement, Dima successfully underwent testing and has been transferred to an educational institution for non-disabled children. The Lekoteka was a turning point in Dima's development. He was given the proper psychological and pedagogical support he needed to improve his condition.



ARO Interventions Highlighted at International Conference in St. Petersburg

From March 19-20, over 400 health and social welfare specialists, as well as government and NGO representatives from Russia and abroad gathered in St. Petersburg to tackle core issues facing children and families affected by HIV/AIDS. The Second International Conference “Family, Child, Society: Problems and Solutions” was organized by ARO partner, St. Petersburg NGO “Doctors to Children” and “HealthRight International”, with support from the St. Petersburg Social Policy Committee. The conference highlighted the practical experience of NGOs and government agencies working in the HIV prevention and HIV care sector. During the two days, participants also discussed ways to increase access to medical and social assistance for vulnerable populations.



NFPCC President Marina Egorova presents at the “Family, Child, Society: Problems and Solutions” conference

In St. Petersburg and throughout Russia, the need to address issues of HIV prevention and care is critical. According to the Russian Federation HIV Center, as of October 31, 2008, 38,616 HIV-positive people were registered in St. Petersburg alone. While efforts have been made by the government and NGOs, there is still a need for better coordination and improved services. Within the framework of the USAID-funded Assistance to Russian Orphans (ARO) program, social service experts in St. Petersburg are addressing such key issues.

ARO implementing partner, National Foundation for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NFPCC) is working in close cooperation with St. Petersburg NGOs on HIV prevention and care in the city. As leaders in the field, NFPCC President, Marina Egorova, presented the organization's regional experience introducing child welfare services. In addition, ARO implementing partners were invited to present their HIV prevention and care experiences and methodologies. The NFPCC

experience and the HIV prevention and care projects ongoing in St. Petersburg provided the participants with concrete examples of working with at-risk youth and families affected by HIV.

Not only did the ARO implementing partners present their activities at the conference, but service providers that have adopted the ARO model and methodologies were also invited to share their experience. During the “Models of Comprehensive Support to Families with Children Affected by HIV” presentations, representatives from the Kalinisky and Krasnogvardeysky District Centers of Social Support to Family and Children in St. Petersburg spoke about their efforts to coordinate multi-source assistance for HIV-positive mothers and their children. Such assistance at the city and municipal levels includes coordinating the HIV Center, maternity welfare clinics, maternity hospitals, polyclinics, drug treatment clinics, education agencies, administrative departments and local NGOs. Over the past two years, the ARO program has developed the approaches and methods currently being used to provide medical-social support to this target group in St. Petersburg. In addition, ARO partner “Stellit” presented their work on HIV prevention among at-risk youth in St. Petersburg vocational schools. The work was developed within ARO and there are currently plans to institutionalize the work throughout all of the city's vocational schools.

Baby Homes Modernization Assistance Association Grows

In an effort to improve the methods and technologies used in Russian baby homes, NFPCC established the Baby Homes Modernization Assistance Association. NFPCC works with baby homes that show initiative and are willing to introduce modern methods. There are different levels of membership, with new members starting as Associate Members. Associate Members receive informational materials and support from NFPCC experts and begin the process of modernizing their approaches to child development. In February and March 2009, six baby homes from St. Petersburg, Tyumen, Krasnoyarsk and Khabarovsk region became Associate Members. In addition, three new baby homes have expressed interest in membership and are in the process of completing the application. The modernization activities are monitored by NFPCC experts who also provide their support in the process. NFPCC Program Coordinator, Anna Poluarshinova, noted, “We are very pleased with the growth of the association. By modernizing the approaches and methodologies of baby homes in Russia, the association works towards improving the quality of life for the children.”



Tambov Region Replicates ARO Early Intervention Model

Tambov City's Coordination Council praised NFPCC's achievements working on early intervention technologies and case management for at risk families. At a meeting in early February, the Coordination Council decided to replicate this experience throughout the city of Tambov. The positive results of the introduction of early detection technology and case management in the city of Tambov encouraged the Oblast Department of Education and Science to replicate the model in nine areas of the Oblast. In these nine areas, working seminars-meetings on social abandonment prevention and early detection model issues have already taken place.

In March, NFPCC continued its work in the region by organizing a seminar for 15 specialists in Tambov. Teachers and staff of Tambov Oblast specialized children's homes participated in the seminar which focused on the introduction of early intervention technologies. The main objective of this event was to help specialists in Tambov effectively support emotional development and provide qualified psychological and pedagogical assistance in the psychological development of children with special needs.

News from Our Partner

NFPCC representatives Marina Egorova and Alexander Spivak participated in the development of a set of documents for competition programs of the Foundation of Support to Children in Crisis, founded by the decree of the President of the Russian Federation including: "I Will Not Give to Anyone" (child abandonment prevention), "New Family" (arrangement of foster families for orphans) and "Assistance League" (early prevention). The competitions are currently ongoing and results will be announced soon.

NFPCC conducted the second seminar on the development of supervisory skills for telephone helpline managers from March 13-15 in Moscow. In total, 18 supervisors from 16 organizations from 9 regions of the Russian Federation (Altay Kray, Novosibirsk, Moscow and Tomsk oblasts, cities of Perm, Moscow, Tambov, Magadan and Novosibirsk and Chukotka) participated in the seminar.

Upcoming Activities:

April 1-2 (Novosibirsk region): Seminar on Support for At-Risk Children

April 1-3 (Tomsk): Study tour for Barnaul specialists on early identification and crisis support for families

April 6-9 (Tambov): Supervision on implementation of early identification technology in working with families and case management

April 6-14 (Khabarovsk): Seminar and supervision on the development of support to children and families in crisis

April 16-17 (Tomsk): Project Management seminar

April 20-21 (Tambov): Seminar and supervision on early intervention for specialists from the Tambov Baby Home

April 27-30 (Tambov): Seminar for child helpline specialists at the "Dom Miloserdiya" Center for Help to Families and Children

April 20-23 (Tomsk): Visit of specialists from the University of Alaska

April 20-24 (St. Petersburg): Study tour of St. Petersburg Baby Home #13 for Krasnoyarsk specialists working on early intervention

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