

Skills Training and Capacity Building in Harm Reduction



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International Harm Reduction Development Program

Open Society Institute

IHRD | INTERNATIONAL
HARM REDUCTION
DEVELOPMENT

2004

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The International Harm Reduction Development program (IHRD) of the Open Society Institute (OSI) supports local, national, and regional initiatives in Central and Eastern Europe, the Russian Federation, and Central Asia that address drug problems through innovative measures based on the philosophy of harm reduction. Harm reduction is a pragmatic and humanistic approach to diminishing the individual and social harms associated with drug use—especially the risk of HIV infection. Harm reduction encompasses a wide range of drug user services including needle and syringe exchange, methadone treatment, health education, medical referrals, and support services.

The Open Society Institute aims to shape public policy to promote democratic governance, human rights and economic, legal and social reform. On a local level, OSI implements a range of initiatives to support the rule of law, education, public health, and independent media. At the same time, OSI works to build alliances across borders and continents on issues such as combating corruption and rights abuses.

A private operating and grantmaking foundation based in New York City, OSI was created in 1993 by investor and philanthropist George Soros to support his foundations in Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Those foundations were established, starting in 1984, to help countries make the transition from communism. OSI has expanded the activities of the Soros foundations network to other areas of the world where the transition to democracy is of particular concern. The Soros foundations network encompasses more than 60 countries, including the United States.

For more information, contact:

International Harm Reduction Development program

Open Society Institute

400 West 59th Street

New York, New York 10019

USA

Tel: 1 212 548 0677

Fax: 1 212 428 4617

Email: IHRD@sorosny.org

www.soros.org/initiatives/ihrd

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Contents

Acknowledgements	i
Introduction	1
Trainings	3
<i>Fundraising</i>	4
<i>Integrating Harm Reduction Practices into Established Sex Work Project Activities</i>	5
<i>Legal Advocacy Initiative</i>	6
<i>Needs of Drug Using Women</i>	7
<i>Needs of People Living with HIV/AIDS</i>	8
<i>Organizational Development</i>	9
<i>Organizing Safe Injection Rooms and Overdose Prevention Training</i>	10
<i>Outreach and Secondary Exchange</i>	11
<i>Pre- and Post-Test HIV Counseling</i>	12
<i>Serving Minority Groups and Developing Community Relations</i>	13
<i>Sexual Health of Drug Users and Their Partners</i>	14
<i>Research, Data Collection, and Evaluation</i>	14
<i>Advocacy</i>	15
Technical Advisors	17
Study Tours and Site Visits	19
Methadone Study Tours	20
Police Study Tours	22
Prison Study Tours	24
Sites of Excellence in Russia and Ukraine	26
Central and Eastern European Harm Reduction Network	29
Conferences and Fellowships	30
Communications and Literature	32

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This resource directory would not have been possible without the hard work of its primary authors and compilers: IHRD consultants Anna Alexandrova and Alexis Andrews, and IHRD staff members Anna Moshkova, program officer; Sue Simon, associate director; and Magdalena Sklarski, program coordinator.

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Introduction

The Open Society Institute began the International Harm Reduction program (IHRD) in 1995 in an effort to respond to rapidly increasing rates of drug use and its accompanying health and social problems in Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union (CEE/fSU). After almost 10 years of work in these regions, IHRD has come to believe that securing and furthering the success of harm reduction does not simply depend on providing funding to projects and other key stakeholders.

Another crucial, but often neglected ingredient for the long-term success of many harm reduction efforts is “capacity building”—technical assistance and training that helps harm reduction projects sustain themselves and have a greater impact.

This resource directory presents activities that reflect IHRD’s commitment to capacity building through approaches that pool the expertise of stakeholders and support the development of project sustainability.

The activities and examples on the following pages are offered as a possible guide for other donors and HIV prevention initiatives.

Initially, IHRD focused on starting up needle and syringe exchanges and a few methadone treatment programs but its activities have since expanded to include support for more replacement therapy, health education, medical referrals, support services, and advocacy. All IHRD-funded projects and initiatives are based on the philosophy of harm reduction, a pragmatic and humane method for diminishing the individual and social harms associated with drug use—especially the risk of HIV infection. Harm reduction emphasizes human rights, common sense, and public health.

Working with foundations from the Soros foundations network, IHRD has provided operational grants and technical support to more than 200 local harm reduction service providers and self-help groups for drug users and people living with HIV/AIDS in 24 countries since its inception.

Harm reduction projects in CEE/fSU operate in a particularly difficult environment. Without capacity building support from IHRD, the Soros foundations network, and other organizations, many projects would find it nearly impossible to develop and sustain their activities. Establishing a single, model needle exchange in a given country is a considerable achievement but it will not have any lasting impact on the HIV epidemic. Real success in decreasing the rate of HIV infection will only occur when harm reduction projects are replicated and implemented on a wider scale and harm reduction advocates successfully promote institutional and policy changes.

Capacity building is key to expanding services and changing policy.

Many harm reduction projects in CEE/fSU face significant challenges such as inefficient management due to inexperience, political antagonism toward harm reduction, and lack of resources. One component of IHRD's efforts to strengthen local capacity has been the use of Technical Advisors (TAs). TAs appointed from local harm reduction programs provide hands-on training and support to projects, work closely with IHRD and Soros foundations to identify local priorities and develop strategies for effectively responding to HIV/AIDS prevention needs. At the same time, TAs are encouraged and supported in strengthening their skills and expanding their knowledge.

In order to build capacity in harm reduction development throughout CEE/fSU and to foster organizational capacity in individual projects, IHRD and Soros foundations provide:

- ▶ Training
- ▶ Technical assistance from Technical Advisors
- ▶ Study tours and site visits
- ▶ Sites of excellence in Russia and Ukraine
- ▶ Networking opportunities, including financial support for the Central and Eastern European Harm Reduction Network
- ▶ Conferences and fellowships
- ▶ Communications materials and other literature

This resource directory outlines each of these capacity building efforts in CEE/fSU.

Trainings

“These trainings make the difference between a project that only has a philosophical grounding and a project that also works in practice.”

—Dan Bigg, Executive Director, Chicago Recovery Alliance

Many of the projects IHRD and Soros foundations fund are the first and only harm reduction services in their communities. Especially at the outset, project leaders and staff may not have the skills or experience necessary to run an NGO effectively and provide the best possible services to their clients.

Capacity building training sessions aim to give projects practical advice on improving the professional skills of their staff, help them better serve their clients, and prepare them for sustainability. Training sessions also give project staff access to expert advice and the opportunity to see model projects in operation. Those who attend the trainings can use them to network with their fellow harm reduction workers from other organizations, learning valuable lessons about project implementation and best practices.

IHRD capacity building trainings cover a wide variety of topics, including building good administrative skills; working with specific populations such as women or Romani communities; the underlying philosophy of harm reduction; specific practice models; and data collection for project monitoring and evaluation. Trainings also emphasize building human resources capacity at all levels and target every type of harm reduction worker, from directors to volunteers.

Whenever possible, IHRD and Soros foundations contract with outstanding local trainers and NGOs from CEE/fSU in order to further build capacity in the region. Several IHRD and Soros foundation funded projects have become training hosts themselves.

From 2000 to 2003, IHRD worked to develop key areas of harm reduction capacity building with trainings on the following topics:

- ▶ Fundraising
- ▶ Integrating Harm Reduction Activities into Established Sex Work Project Activities
- ▶ Legal Advocacy Initiative
- ▶ Needs of Drug Using Women
- ▶ Needs of People Living with HIV/AIDS
- ▶ Organizational Development
- ▶ Organizing Safe Injection Rooms and Overdose Prevention Training
- ▶ Outreach and Secondary Exchange
- ▶ Pre- and Post-Test HIV Counseling
- ▶ Serving Minority Groups and Developing Community Relations

- ▶ Sexual Health Needs of Drug Users and Their Partners
- ▶ Research, Data Collection, and Evaluation
- ▶ Advocacy

Organizational Development is a required training for all projects because administrative and management skills are essential for the successful operation of all projects. IHRD and Soros foundations then invite harm reduction projects to select two other training courses each year.

Projects generally send two participants to each training and the trainees are encouraged to provide follow-up workshops for fellow staff when they return home. Trainings take place throughout the region and are generally conducted in Russian or English (with simultaneous translation).

The following are brief descriptions of the structures and results of trainings organized by IHRD and Soros foundations with local partners.

Fundraising

“Once programs are able to incorporate a degree of expertise in organizational management, the next step toward project sustainability is fundraising. As projects improve their fundraising capacity, communication improves, and the whole issue of harm reduction also improves. Local authorities and police become more accepting, and the public becomes more supportive of the projects.”

– Balázs Sátor, Executive Director, Civil Society Development Foundation, Budapest

An overwhelming number of organizational development training participants requested additional training focused on fundraising. Effective fundraising is crucial to building the long-term sustainability for most direct service and advocacy organizations, yet it is often a formidable task for harm reduction programs. Programs in their third year of IHRD/Soros foundation funding have the opportunity to take an intensive fundraising course run by the Hungarian Civil Society Development Foundation.

The training examines the many elements of fundraising, with a particular focus on the importance of creating a diversified funding base. The training also provides participants with crucial “know-how” for fundraising and resource mobilization such as overcoming the barriers of traditional attitudes; locating various types of financial sources; creating and finding varied fundraising opportunities (events within the community, support from corporations, innovative fundraising ideas); and developing successful donor relationships.

In 2003, there were three fundraising trainings, two in Budapest and one in Moscow, with a total of 50 participants.

For further information about fundraising trainings, contact:

Civil Society Development Foundation
Mészöly u. 4. III/3
H-1117 Budapest, Hungary
Phone/fax: 36 1 385 3938, 385 3914, 385 2966
Email: ctf@ctf.hu
Website: www.ctf.hu/angol/

Integrating Harm Reduction Practices into Established Sex Work Project Activities

“Service providers and the general public view female sex workers as a source of disease. Capacity building through trainings can help to ameliorate the belief that ‘we will save them because we know what is good for them’ and to replace it with a more informed perspective that respects the dignity of sex workers. A three-day training is a start to teaching service providers how to create a friendlier and more comfortable environment for sex workers.”

—Katarina Jiresova, Executive Director, *Odyssey*, Bratislava

Economic and political changes over the past decade have created extreme financial hardship in CEE/FSU, particularly for women. These difficulties have resulted in a dramatic increase in the number of women and girls entering the sex work industry, either voluntarily or against their will. Some are illegal foreign immigrants fleeing poverty in search of a better life; others are the victims of trafficking and sexual exploitation. One thing they all share is an increased risk of HIV infection.

In order to serve this high-risk population, two IHRD-funded NGOs, AIDS Infoshare in Moscow and Odyssey in Bratislava, combined their expertise to develop a special training to integrate harm reduction practices at 10 organizations providing social care and medical services to sex workers. The 10 organizations were selected by IHRD and Soros foundations and are located in Belarus, Bulgaria, Estonia, Poland, Romania, Russia, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan.

During the three-day course, participants learned basic principles of harm reduction, including safer-injection techniques. They also learned how to conduct outreach with sex workers, particularly through the use of peer education programs. Attendees participated in role plays and group work and visited a sex work outreach program.

Odyssey director Katarina Jiresova said that demand for training is increasing and that “the success of this program indicates the growing capacity of Odyssey, as well as the increasing acceptance of harm reduction practices.”

Training to integrate harm reduction activities into sex worker projects started in 2001. To date there has been one three-day session in Bratislava for all

IHRD-sponsored sex work project workers. The training involved 18 participants from nine NGOs.

Once a number of harm reduction projects added on components to reach more sex workers, the need for more training became clear.

The AIDS Foundation East West, in collaboration with various sex work/harm reduction partners, has developed a training to support projects that have added a sex work component to their harm reduction activities. Almost all of IHRD's Russian projects have added a sex work component to their harm reduction activities and participate in this training. The trainings also address advocacy and policy issues related to sex work and harm reduction.

For more information about harm reduction for sex worker project trainings, contact:

Katarina Jiresova
Odysseus
Bratislava, Slovakia
Email: katjir@yahoo.com

or

Robin Montgomery
AIDS Foundation East West (AFEW)
15/5 Chayanova St., Moscow
Phone: 7 095 250 6377; Fax: 250 6387
Email: robin2001ru@yahoo.com; robin_montgomery@afew.org

Legal Advocacy Initiative

In the fall of 2002, IHRD and Soros foundations issued a call for letters of intent for a new legal support and advocacy initiative. These proposals from organized groups of human rights lawyers and advocates described their ideas for projects to provide legal assistance, legal advocacy, and public education regarding drug use, harm reduction, and HIV/AIDS.

Ten applicants were selected to participate in a November 2002 training seminar in Budapest. The seminar was organized in collaboration with the Hungarian Civil Liberties Union and with Columbia University's Public Interest Law Initiative and focused on issues of discrimination, human rights, and harm reduction. Following the training, the 10 participants were invited to submit full proposals.

For more information about the Legal Advocacy Initiative, contact:

Judit Fridli
Hungarian Civil Liberties Union
Eszek utca 8/b. fdszt 2
Budapest 1114-H, HUNGARY
Phone/fax: (36 1 209 0046
Website: <http://www.c3.hu/~hclu/>

or

Renate J. Lunn
Columbia University Public Interest Law Initiative
Columbia Law School, Mail code 3525
435 West 116th Street, New York, NY 10027
Tel: (212) 851-1060; Fax: (212) 851-1064
Website: <http://www.pili.org>

Needs of Drug Using Women

“Women users are less visible than men, but that does not mean there are fewer of them. In general, women use drugs with their male partners at home. They rarely enter harm reduction services because they are more stigmatized than men, the services are not specific to their needs, it is unsafe, no facilities exist for their children, or they fear losing their children if they are registered as drug users....Incorporating a gendered approach to harm reduction services at the outset is effective and necessary.”

—Anke Wevers, *President, International Harm Reduction Network on Women and Drugs (IHRA)*

The three-day training “Needs of Drug Using Women,” organized and conducted by the International Harm Reduction Network on Women and Drugs (IHRN) acquaints harm reduction workers with the issues they will face when providing harm reduction services for women.

Participants learn to assess women’s specific concerns and responsibilities—such as motherhood and childcare—when devising a harm reduction program. More than men, female drug users frequently earn money for drugs through sex work or by partnering with a dealer. Participants learn to recognize that programs need to provide services for children and support for pregnant women. They devise strategies to protect women from violence and to address negative public opinion about women drug users. Participants develop a keen sense of the need for creative, gender-conscious harm reduction models.

According to Anke Wevers: “In Uzbekistan, which is a Muslim country, women are not always able to visit public health centers, which makes targeting women drug users very difficult. At one of our trainings, we realized that Uzbek women are able to convene in the hammam, or traditional bathhouses. Using this location as a resource, we devised a constructive gender-specific approach to harm reduction in Uzbekistan.”

In 2001, IHRA initiated the training with three three-day sessions in Odessa, Ukraine, involving 61 staff and volunteers from 31 harm reduction NGOs.

For more information about needs of drug using women trainings, contact:

Anke Wevers
IHRA Network on Women and Drugs
Clemensstraat 122
3082 CL Rotterdam, The Netherlands
Phone: 31 10 4 28 11 87
Email: info@bureaubenw.nl or wevers@bureaubenw.nl

Needs of People Living with HIV/AIDS

“Because people living with HIV participated in this training, I could get a better sense of what life with HIV was like and how people felt when receiving their HIV-positive result.”

—training participant Anna Pehlivanova

The Social AIDS Committee of Warsaw, Poland, created this training for harm reduction workers and volunteers in order to share the latest information on the diagnosis and treatment of HIV. Many of the psycho-social aspects of the epidemic are poorly understood, so this training focuses heavily on pre- and post-test HIV counseling and on helping participants become more attuned to the needs of people living with HIV. It aims to dispel prejudices about drug users, pregnant women with HIV, and the sexual practices of people with HIV. By introducing many key facts about the AIDS epidemic, it helps participants to understand the disease from both an individual and social perspective. In order to give the trainees as much insight into these matters as possible, the training team includes people living with HIV/AIDS and their relatives. Finally, it trains participants in the skills necessary for the development of HIV/AIDS-related education, care, and support.

After finishing the training, one harm reduction worker said, “I used to think that it was almost criminal to become a mother when infected with HIV.” The training helped her understand that the transmission of HIV from mother to child in pregnancy is rare and that people can live many years with HIV infection. After the training, she said that when she meets someone with HIV she feels better prepared “to give the person a more optimistic vision for his or her future.”

Trainings on meeting the needs of people living with HIV/AIDS started in 2000 with one three-day session in Warsaw, Poland, with 16 participants from 6 NGOs. The 2001 training in Minsk, Belarus, had 18 participants from 9 NGOs. In 2002 and 2003, 9 trainings were held in Belarus, Hungary, Poland, and Russia with a total of 162 participants from 82 NGOs.

For more information about meeting the needs of people living with HIV/AIDS trainings, contact:

Aleksandra Skonieczna
Social AIDS Committee
ul. Hoza 72
00-682 Warsaw, Poland
Email: skaids@wp.pl

Organizational Development

“About 80 to 90 percent of NGOs in the region are run by experts. They do a good job with project implementation, but they lack the managerial experience necessary for development. This problem often leads project administrators to burn out. For this reason, the organizational development training is crucial to the sustainability of these NGOs, and is the only way for them to gain credibility.”

—Balázs Sátor, Executive Director, Civil Society Development Foundation, Budapest

The Civil Society Development Foundation (CSDF) of Hungary worked with IHRD to design a mandatory organizational development training program to enhance the strategic and management skills of IHRD and Soros foundation-funded projects. The four-day training course uses participatory exercises, innovative games, and visual aids to teach managers the skills they need to efficiently structure and evaluate their programs, develop long-term strategies, and attract additional funding. Participants complete the training session with increased knowledge of financial management, human resources, administration, fundraising, public relations, marketing, and working with the media.

Whenever possible, the organizational development training is conducted in local languages, and emphasizes a common understanding of the different management concepts as well as providing opportunities for networking among group members. Indeed, partner organizations like CSDF–Poland and the Nonprofit Partnership for Civic Initiatives Support in Russia assisted CSDF in conducting trainings in Russia and Poland last year. The trainings also provide participants with materials they can use immediately. According to one participant: “It was good to have the written materials, because they help us share received information with our colleagues at home.”

In 2000, CSDF conducted five four-day trainings attended by 91 project managers from 46 NGOs. In 2001, there were seven trainings attended by 138 managers from 69 NGOs. Six trainings in 2002 were attended by 98 managers from 63 NGOs. The trainings took place in 11 CEE/fSU countries.

For further information about organizational development trainings, contact:

Civil Society Development Foundation
Mészöly u. 4. III/3
H-1117 Budapest, Hungary
Phone/fax: 36 1 385 3938, 385 3914, 385 2966
Email: ctf@ctf.hu
Website: www.ctf.hu/angol/

Organizing Safe Injection Rooms and Overdose Prevention Training

“Our injection room began serving many drug users in 1994, and since then, another three injection rooms have opened in the city. During this time, the number of overdose deaths in Frankfurt has dropped by about 20 a year. Last year, we saw 216 overdoses and no deaths. In that sense, we feel we are successful. However, it is especially encouraging when a former user stops by in a nice car to let us know that he is clean, married, and has kids now.”

—*Josch Steinmetz, Safe Injection Room Manager, Integrative Drogenhilfe, Frankfurt*

Rates of heroin overdoses and overdose fatalities are increasing globally. The earlier the intervention, the higher the chance of survival for the individual. However, even though most people who fatally overdose do so in the presence of others, they frequently do not receive help until hours after the overdose occurs. IHRD grantees report that fear of the police is the number one reason for this delay. This training conducted by Integrative Drogenhilfe (IDH) of Frankfurt, Germany, encourages drug users to seek help in emergency situations by focusing not only on how to prevent and respond to overdoses, but also on how to strategically increase cooperation between drug users, harm reduction workers, and the police.

At the beginning of the training, participants learn about the history and legal framework of heroin overdoses. Participants are then taught to recognize symptoms and make appropriate interventions. They practice emergency exercises to keep a person alive until medical help arrives, including rescue breathing and chest compression, using equipment such as the bag-valve-mask, and administering antidotes.

One participant noted the new confidence the training gave him: “Earlier I thought I knew everything about overdose first aid, but in Germany I have learned how to do it professionally. The trainers explained it to us in such a clear and comprehensive way. I am not afraid of becoming confused in an overdose situation.”

Participants also learn preventive strategies such as educational outreach, and visit several drug service facilities, including a safe-injecting room.

Participants in this training seminar are expected to pass on their new skills and expertise by teaching overdose rescue techniques to their colleagues and by holding seminars with police officers and healthcare workers to share this life-saving information.

In 2001, IDH conducted two three-day training sessions in Frankfurt, Germany, involving 40 staff and volunteers from 20 harm reduction NGOs.

For more information about safe injection room and overdose prevention trainings, contact:

Hans-Volker Happel, M.D.
Chair Professor of Social Education
University of Applied Sciences, Frankfurt
Integrative Drogenhilfe
Schielestraße 22
60314 Frankfurt am Main
Frankfurt, Germany
Phone: 069 94 19 70 0
Fax: 069 94 19 70 25
Email: info@idh-frankfurt.de, happel@idh-frankfurt.de

Outreach and Secondary Exchange

“If you wait for a drug user to come into a clinic, you will sit by yourself in an empty room for a long time. To contact drug users you have to go out and find them. Our street workers do not sit in the winter in a warm, comfortable bus when they are working on the Krakow streets. The same snow or rain that falls on the addicts falls on the outreach workers. This is a basic principle for effective outreach work. Be where your clients are.”

—Marek Zygodlo, Director, MONAR Krakow Drugs Project

Learning “how to be where your clients are” is the key component of this three-day training course offered by MONAR. In order to be a successful outreach worker, one must have a practical and empathetic approach to outreach.

Participants learn a variety of harm reduction skills such as safer injecting techniques, secondary exchange (teaching drug users to bring clean needles to their friends), ways to educate drug users, and how to involve the community in supporting drug users. The trainers use a mix of role-play, lectures, and group work. Participants visit needle exchange sites and a methadone hospital. Upon completing the training, one participant from Kazakhstan reported that because of “the training and knowledge we received in Krakow, our outreach work is well organized and we have expanded our activities.”

MONAR started the trainings in 2001 and conducted five three-day sessions involving 102 outreach workers from 51 NGOs. MONAR's two trainings in 2002 were attended by 44 outreach workers from 22 NGOs. All trainings were held in Krakow, Poland.

For more information about outreach and secondary exchange training, contact:

Marek Zygodlo, Director
Monar Krakow Drugs Project
MONAR
ul. SW. Katarzyny 3
PL-31-063 Krakow, Poland
Phone: 012 430 59 64
Fax: 012 430 59 64
monar_kr@monar.krakow.pl

Pre- and Post-Test HIV Counseling

"Olga, a 24-year-old woman who had only used drugs for a year when she got her HIV test on the bus, was shocked to learn that she was infected. Psychologists and social workers had to talk to her extensively and assist her with visits to the AIDS center."

—Daniel Novitchkov, *Humanitarian Action, St. Petersburg, Russia*

Finding out that you are HIV-positive is a life-changing and traumatic experience. In Olga's case she was fortunate to have received excellent assistance from the harm reduction NGO Humanitarian Action. IHRD has worked with the Social AIDS Committee in Warsaw, Poland, to provide pre- and post-test HIV counseling training so that other harm reduction organizations can provide social service care like the kind given by Humanitarian Action.

The trainings aim to introduce program directors, social workers, psychologists, and medical professionals to testing and procedures for pre- and post-test HIV counseling and increase the number of qualified counselors working for harm reduction programs in the region. It emphasizes the necessity of incorporating professional counseling into the testing procedure.

After listening to the experiences of HIV positive people, participants discuss their attitudes toward HIV/AIDS and gain a better emotional understanding of what patients are going through during the testing process. They also observe exemplary counseling situations on video and participate in role plays. Information is presented about treatment, care, and support for people living with HIV/AIDS.

Pre- and post-test HIV Counseling began in 2002 with three three-day sessions in Warsaw, Poland, attended by 120 participants from 62 NGOs.

For more information about pre- and post-test
HIV Counseling trainings, contact:

Aleksandra Skonieczna
Social AIDS Committee
Ul. Hoza 72
00-682 Warsaw, Poland
Email: skaids@wp.pl

Serving Minority Groups and Developing Community Relations

“In this world, to be a minority is not a question of ethnicity. It means discrimination, poverty, poor education, ill health, and living in segregated areas of the city. It means anger and frustration. It means many of the things that can lead to drug use.”

—“*Approaching Minority Communities*,” by Zahari Nikolov and Anna Pehlivanova, *Initiative for Health Foundation, Sofia, Harm Reduction News*, fall 2001

The Initiative for Health Foundation (IFH), an IHRD/Soros foundation funded project located in Sofia, Bulgaria, developed and offers this training. It serves a crucial need because IHRD and the Soros foundations deal with drug users who are often members of minority groups ranging from Afghani refugees to homosexuals to sex workers. Drug users in most societies feel marginalized, and being a member of an ethnic or sexual minority group compounds feelings of exclusion. IFH’s years of experience working with the Romani community made it an ideal organization to develop a training that addresses the unique issues that programs face when providing harm reduction services to members of minority communities.

In their 2001 *Harm Reduction News* article about working with minority communities, IFH staff members Zahari Nikolov and Anna Pehlivanova noted that minority and community relations trainings are important for harm reduction workers in general because they become aware of the need to “target narrow populations with the double vulnerability of stigmatization as both drug users and members of another marginalized community.”

The trainings teach participants how to deliver harm reduction services effectively to these isolated communities. Participants first gain an understanding of some of the relevant political, economic, and cultural considerations of specific minority groups. They also learn how to penetrate insular minority groups, and how to form lasting contacts with members of these communities. In addition to presentations, discussions, and group work, participants visit the National Centre for Addictions and a Methadone Maintenance program. They also visit an IFH needle exchange outreach program in a Romani community, meet with police officers working in the community, and visit a day-care center for homeless youth.

In 2001 and 2002, IFH conducted three-day trainings twice each year in Sofia, Bulgaria. The 2001 trainings involved 59 staff members from 30 harm reduction NGOs. The 2002 trainings had 18 participants from 9 NGOs.

For more information about serving minority groups and developing community relations trainings, contact:

Elena Jankova
Initiative for Health Foundation
126 Tzar Simeon St., B-7-45
Sofia 1309, Bulgaria
Phone/fax: 359 29 515 963
Website: <http://sofianep@online.bg>

Sexual Health of Drug Users and Their Partners

IHRD has worked with The Polish Association of Trainers and Psychotherapists to develop this training based on expressed interest from grantees and in recognition of the fact that the next wave of transmission in the region is anticipated to be through sexual contact between infected drug users and their partners.

Participants increase their knowledge regarding the intersection of drug use, sexual behavior, and HIV, and learn how to minimize their clients' risk of infection and re-infection. The training enables participants to evaluate the risk of particular sexual behaviors for both themselves and their clients.

Training on meeting sexual health needs of drug users and their partners started in 2003 with one three-day session in Warsaw, Poland with 18 participants from eight NGOs. The next two trainings took place in Belarus, Georgia, and Romania involving 38 grantees from 19 NGOs.

For more information about sexual health needs of drug users and their partners trainings, contact:

Monika Szymanska
ul. Lokietka 6
Serock, Poland
Email: monikapro@poczta.onet.pl

Research, Data Collection, and Evaluation

Nonprofits are increasingly required to demonstrate and evaluate the effectiveness of their work. Funders, the government, and the public want to see signs that the organization is having a positive impact on the community and is meeting its stated goals. In addition, the data can be used to respond to critics, to publicize the program to current and prospective clients, and to enhance outreach, public relations, and marketing efforts. Internally, it allows the nonprofit to monitor change and improve operations, determine staff training needs,

identify new trends, serve as a basis for strategic planning, and allocate resources more effectively.

This training helps participants learn to evaluate service delivery efforts both qualitatively and quantitatively; use evaluation strategies to enhance project management; and establish and monitor goals and objectives. In addition, participants learn about data collection methodologies, research designs, and strategies for improving computerized records.

In 2003, two trainings were held in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan involving 41 grantees from 22 NGOs.

For more information about research, data collection and evaluation trainings, contact:

Aleksandr Slatvitsky
Email: kplc@klaipeda.omnitel.net

Grzegorz Wodowski
Email: grzegorz@monar.krakow.pl

Vyacheslav Kushakov
Email: vkushakov@aidsalliance.org

Advocacy

Harm reduction service providers face considerable political and community resistance, and although excellent pilot projects have been established in many countries, they often do not reach an adequate number of drug users. It is critical to expand these projects, but this will only be possible if there is a supportive policy environment. Thus, grassroots advocacy at the project level is a key ingredient to policy change.

In late 2003, IHRD began offering grantees new advocacy trainings, developed in cooperation with the International Harm Reduction Association and the World Health Organization. Participants learn how to work with mass media, develop positive public relations, support peer education (among police, community leaders, politicians, and medical professionals), and advocate with local and national government. Community organizing principles are also a focus, with an emphasis on networking and coalition building, leadership, and development of local strategies.

A number of IHRD Technical Advisors have emphasized that effective advocacy by harm reduction workers will require a substantial, long-term investment of time in meeting with health and law enforcement officials. The way these meetings are approached and utilized will be crucial to changing attitudes and policies and securing the long-term future of harm reduction projects.

Advocacy trainings started in 2003 involved 56 participants from 34 NGOs. Sessions were held in Krakow and Moscow.

For more information about advocacy trainings, contact:

Alexander Tsekhanovich
Humanitarian Action Foundation
Ofitersky pereulok 6-2
197110 St. Petersburg, Russia
Email: sacha@humanitarianaction.org

Sergey Kostin
"The Way Home" Charity Fund
42 B Arnautskaya Street, p/b 25
Odessa 65011, Ukraine
Email: wayhome@farlep.net

Technical Advisors (TAs)

“In the beginning of the harm reduction movement in the region, Technical Advisors literally helped build projects from scratch. Now a lot of projects are aware of the need to build their capacity. For example, a project in Vinnica asked for a three-day training that would incorporate organizational development, project management, psychological aspects of harm reduction, counseling, fundraising and HIV. TAs can meet these new capacity building needs. They have helped harm reduction projects like ours in Odessa to also function as a training center for harm reduction professionals.”

—Andrei Protopopov, *Charity AIDS Foundation, IHRD TA for Ukraine*

The history of using TAs for capacity building is part of the evolution of IHRD. Since 1995, the understanding of a “Technical Advisor” has changed. When the program started, “Project Developers,” mostly experts from the West, were employed as advisors. As IHRD and Soros foundations increased their efforts to build local capacity, indigenous service providers who once relied on outside Project Developers in the late 1990s soon emerged as well-known experts themselves and became TAs for IHRD.

A Technical Advisor is a harm reduction expert. Technical Advisors (TAs) play a key role in building the capacity of less experienced harm reduction projects. IHRD and Soros foundations are very fortunate to have an excellent team of TAs that they can rely upon to visit projects and provide technical support. TAs have considerable experience and knowledge and IHRD and Soros foundations have made it a priority to support their continued professional development, which ultimately contributes to improved capacity in the region. TAs are also encouraged to learn as much information as possible about harm reduction in their respective regions.

IHRD, Soros foundations, and their partners have contracted a total of 33 TAs to provide ongoing support to harm reduction. TAs are local specialists with in-depth and first-hand knowledge of setting up and running successful harm reduction and advocacy projects. They are involved in all phases of project development and implementation. TAs assess the HIV and drug use-related situation in the specific city/region and use this knowledge to assist IHRD and Soros foundations by reviewing project proposals and making suggestions regarding program structures, activities, and budgets. Once projects are approved for funding, TAs conduct site visits and are in frequent contact with projects via telephone and email. TAs also conduct training sessions and study tours on specific issues as needed.

The scope of the TAs’ work is not limited to the operation of the projects themselves—they often advocate for funding and support for harm reduction by meeting with local and national officials. For example, it is often difficult to start up a needle exchange, so having a TA visit local officials together with

future project leaders helps to promote discussion about the benefits of harm reduction. TAs developed many of the training programs and study tours described in this resource directory. TAs work in close collaboration with the Soros foundations staff, IHRD, and the projects, frequently serving as the “glue” to ensure successful collaboration among all partners on challenging initiatives.

Most often, a TA is responsible for supporting projects in a particular region or country. Other TAs focus on a specific issue. For example, there are TAs who work specifically on different issues around methadone maintenance treatment, including the medical, legal and organizational aspects of setting up a MMT project. These TAs advocate for policy changes that would make the introduction of methadone and other substitution therapies possible. Another TA supports sex worker-targeted services; and other TAs are working on improving HIV-related treatment.

True to its commitment to capacity building in the region, IHRD encourages TAs to participate in trainings and IHRD-funded meetings, and apply for scholarships to international conferences. IHRD has held annual meetings for TAs where IHRD staff and TAs work together on strategy development, identifying priorities, TA work plans, and ways of strengthening the TA pool. As a result of IHRD’s success in using TAs to help establish and bring many regional harm reduction projects to maturity, IHRD is letting its formalized TA structure be replaced with informal networks of local experts.

Without dedicated TAs, it would have been impossible for IHRD and Soros foundations to support and bring such a large number of projects to fruition.

For a listing of IHRD TAs, go to: www.soros.org/initiatives/ihrd

Study Tours and Site Visits

“It is better to see once than to hear 100 times.”

—comment from participant at Vilnius Substance Abuse Treatment Centre study tour

Securing committed and enduring support from important stakeholders is crucial for harm reduction programs that want to become established and sustainable. Police, politicians, public health officials, doctors, lawyers, and journalists play key roles in either hindering or promoting harm reduction. A critical task for all harm reduction projects is to develop and improve their capacity to educate various stakeholder groups within a community about the importance of harm reduction.

Because harm reduction is a new and controversial philosophy in many countries, abstract discussions and lectures are unlikely to convince stakeholders that harm reduction is an effective way to reduce HIV infection rates. For this reason, IHRD and Soros foundations have supported educational meetings of these stakeholders with their peers at model harm reduction sites throughout the region (known as “sites of excellence”). In some cases, funding may be provided for participants to visit sites of excellence in Western Europe, Canada, and the United States.

Study tours have been used to gain stakeholder support in several key areas: methadone, police relations, harm reduction in prisons, and general harm reduction activities.

Methadone Study Tours

“I was also greatly impressed by methadone substitution therapy. After five years in operation, the methadone programs I visited have helped to lower crime and restore connections between drug users and their family and friends. The programs have also helped clients develop job skills. Before the trip I objected to methadone treatment, but now I plan to support it and will implement it in my region.”

—*Ravil Krubangaliye, M.D., Chief Physician at the Aktobe Narcological Dispensary (Kazakhstan), after visiting a Methadone Clinic in Poland*

Methadone maintenance treatment, together with needle exchange and safer sex messages can maximize the reduction of drug-related harm. Due to ignorance, fear, and lack of understanding of international laws, local and national policymakers are often reluctant to introduce comprehensive methadone substitution programs. For example, methadone treatment is still illegal in many countries of the former Soviet Union.

In order to promote methadone substitution therapy, a variety of different groups (harm reduction workers, doctors, police representatives, policymakers) have toured the Vilnius Substance Abuse Treatment Centre in Lithuania and Polish methadone clinics to learn from their success.

Vilnius Substance Abuse Treatment Centre

The Vilnius Substance Abuse Treatment Centre (VSATC) was the first institution in the former Soviet Union to introduce methadone maintenance therapy for its clients. Over the last five years, it has hosted a number of study tours to promote both methadone substitution therapy and needle exchange. VSATC is a governmental health care institution that provides HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment and rehabilitation to substance users. It offers outpatient and inpatient detoxification, substitution treatment for heroin dependence, inpatient treatment and rehabilitation programs, outreach and needle exchange, and a day care center. The wide range of services, impressive record, and supportive policy environment make VSATC an ideal site for study tours. VSATC’s director, Emilis Subata, M.D., is a leading advocate for substitution treatment in CEE/FSU, and has served as one of IHRD’s Technical Advisors (TAs) for methadone treatment for a number of years. He and his team at VSATC researched and wrote “Methadone Treatment Presentation Brief,” which is used by various stakeholders to advocate for the introduction of methadone substitution therapy.

Subata has also seen first-hand the powerful effect that a site visit can have on gaining stakeholder support for methadone treatment.

“During the first study tour there was a group of high officials from narcological centers and interior ministries from Belarus and Moldova visiting the

MMT projects,” said Subata. “We had also invited a couple of key stakeholders from the Lithuanian Ministry of the Interior’s Office against Drug Trafficking. Though we had good contacts with our colleagues in the Lithuanian Ministry of Interior, we were a bit anxious about what they would say about methadone during the meeting. Usually study tour participants are cautious, if not suspicious about the ‘legal distribution of drugs.’ It was a nice surprise when both law enforcement officers did their best to convince their colleagues from Belarus and Moldova to implement methadone treatment in their countries as soon as possible. They advocated for methadone even more actively than the health care staff!”

For more information about methadone study tours please go to:
www.soros.org/initiatives/ihrd

Upper-Silesian Society “Wspólnota”

This NGO in Chorzów, Poland, closely cooperates with the Hospital and Medical Center that has provided methadone maintenance treatment for over 100 patients since its inception in 1998. The Upper-Silesian Society and the hospital organize study tours that promote substitution therapy. The Society has strong connections with representatives from all parts of the drug treatment system in this region of Silesia. Chorzów hospital also provides inpatient and outpatient care for approximately 800 people living with HIV/AIDS, the majority of whom are intravenous drug users. This study tour site is an excellent location for stakeholders to learn about consultation points, detoxification, and rehabilitation, in addition to methadone maintenance. The project director, Marek Beniowski, M.D., is one of IHRD’s TAs for HIV treatment and care issues.

For more information about the Upper-Silesian Society, contact:

Marek Beniowski
Upper-Silesian Society
10 Zjednoczenia Street
Chorzow, Poland
Phone: 4832 2417192
Email: odtawkmb@silesia.pik-net.pl

Police Study Tours

“Last year, I visited a harm reduction project in Poland....What I saw there persuaded me that the state is not the only entity that can deal with the drug problem....Most policemen are in favor of isolating and incarcerating drug users. If they knew more about harm reduction they would understand that it enables drug users to stop violating the law and return to society as useful people.”

—*Toulesh Egaliev, Lieutenant Colonel, Department of Drug Control, Interior Affairs, Western Kazakhstan*

Establishing good relations with the local police is essential for all harm reduction projects. What use is there in establishing a needle exchange, if clients are going to be arrested when they walk out the door? Over the last few years, IHRD has sent a number of harm reduction project staff and police representatives to MONAR Krakow. More recently, the Humanitarian Action project in St. Petersburg, Russia, became the second host site for these study tours.

Study tours are an ideal method for many IHRD Technical Advisors to promote education and awareness as a means of improving the relations between law enforcement, harm reduction projects, and drug users.

“The right approach to the local law enforcement agencies can make great advances for harm reduction,” said Andrei Protopopov, IHRD TA and director of the NGO Charity AIDS Foundation, Ukraine. “When talking to police, we used to present harm reduction with the aggressive message that ‘it’s legal, we are going to do it and please don’t interfere.’ In my local trainings for the police I have shifted this focus to educating the police about HIV, about drug use, about their own professional safety, and showing them the human face of drug use. Many police simply regard a drug user as a criminal. We should ask the police for help, but we should also show them that it’s an equal exchange, and that we can provide them with valuable knowledge in return.”

MONAR Krakow

MONAR Krakow offers a wide range of services for drug users, including detoxification, harm reduction, psychological support, a shelter, and a rehabilitation center. MONAR also runs a sex worker project, and a wide variety of training courses. MONAR’s integrated approach is an excellent model of information sharing and cooperation.

MONAR is also noted for its study tours for police officials and high-level policymakers. Recently, in collaboration with IHRD and UNDP, MONAR developed a training module specifically for police officers.

According to MONAR director Marek Zygadlo, study tours have helped eliminate conflict between police and harm reduction groups and gain advocates among the police who have gone on to become important policymakers:

“Four and a half or five years ago, a group of narcologists from Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan came to visit our needle exchange program. They were very impressed, but said that they could never successfully implement a needle exchange on the street at home without being arrested. I explained that establishing a relationship with the police is the first step toward building a secure project. Shortly afterwards police from Kyrgyzstan visited our site. Today, the law enforcement situation in Kyrgyzstan is very positive. One of the police who participated in my study tour is now the first vice-minister of the interior, and has a very positive relationship with the harm reduction centers.”

For more information about MONAR Krakow, go to: www.monar.kki.pl

Humanitarian Action, St. Petersburg

In 1997, Médecins du Monde established Russia’s first harm reduction project in St. Petersburg, which is now operated by the NGO Humanitarian Action. With a variety of harm reduction projects, including two mobile needle exchange outlets, they serve many vulnerable populations in the city. Having experienced police raids, and even open confrontation, this young NGO serves as a good training site to provide hands-on experience in working with police. Through role plays and real examples, these study tours focus on demonstrating to the police that drug addiction is not a crime, but a treatable condition. Police also get general knowledge about HIV constitutional rights and freedoms, human rights obligations, and learn about the best practices of police departments in other countries.

For more information about Humanitarian Action’s police study tours, contact:

Alexander Tsekhanovich
Humanitarian Action
Ofitersky pereulok 6 appt, 2
St. Petersburg, Russia
Phone/fax: 7 (812) 237 14 95
Email: office@humanitarianaction.org

Prison Study Tours

“As long as HIV is readily spread in prison, any effort to slow the HIV epidemic outside of prison is sabotaged.”

—Kasia Malinowska-Sempruch, IHRD Director

Prison study tours have been a key element in gaining support for prison initiatives started in 1999 by IHRD and Soros foundations in close collaboration with the Trimbos Institute in the Netherlands and the University of Bremen, Germany. All 10 of the first-year prison grantees were invited to Oldenburg, Lower-Saxony, Germany, in 2001 to get an overview of possible HIV prevention and harm reduction activities in prisons and to network with each other. The study tour included a visit to three prisons and two prison hospitals, presentations and discussions with prison staff, doctors, inmates, and governors about HIV prevention in prisons, and training about working with community health personnel. A similar study tour was organized in 2002 for new prison projects in Central Asia.

To promote the use of methadone in Polish prisons, IHRD and the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network organized a study tour of Canadian prisons for a small group of Polish participants, including the director of the Penitentiary Department of the Central Board of the Prison Service. The participants visited prisons in Quebec and Ontario and met with the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network, academics working on prison health issues, and the chair of the Canadian Senate’s Special Committee on Illegal Drugs.

For more information about prison study tours, contact:

Ralf Jurgens
Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network
<http://www.aidslaw.ca/>
417 Saint-Pierre Street, Suite 408
Montréal, Québec H2Y 2M4
Phone: 514 397 6828
Fax: 514 397 8570
Website: <http://info@aidslaw.ca>

Health Reforms in Penitentiary Institutions, Moldova

The Moldova prison projects is used as a site of excellence and was selected as the host site for the November 2002 meeting for all grantees working on harm reduction in prisons. In 1999, the government ordered Colony No. 18 in Branesti, Moldova, to start a harm reduction project, which would be supported logistically by the NGO, Health Reforms in Penitentiary Institutions, and funded by IHRD and the Soros foundation–Moldova.

Nicolae Bodrug, director of the prison's health unit, said prisoners were initially very reluctant to participate in the project because they thought "it was a trap to identify injection drug users and discover the flow of drug supplies." Gradually, their concerns subsided as nothing bad happened to drug-using prisoners who participated in the project and they saw that services were anonymous. Harm reduction has become an accepted practice in the prison and even the prison administration and minister of justice support it.

For more information about harm reduction efforts in Moldova's prisons, contact:

Larisa Pintilei
Health Reforms in Penitentiary Institutions
35 Titulescu Street
Chisinau 2001-MD, Moldova
Phone: 3732 527077
Email: dla@carlux.mldnet.com

Sites of Excellence in Russia and Ukraine

IHRD and Soros foundations have supported more projects in Russia and Ukraine than in any other countries. Given the geographic range of these projects and their diverse needs, IHRD, the Open Health Institute (OHI), a spin-off organization of the Open Society Institute–Russia (OSI–Russia), and the International Renaissance Foundation–Ukraine decided to offer additional training opportunities for grantees. These trainings are designed to help project staff develop practical skills and interact with colleagues from their own country. These training sessions also aim to create local training capacity at Russian and Ukrainian model projects. The trainings, which received tremendous financial help from the UK Department for International Development (DFID), have helped to create a more positive policy environment, with local authorities often developing more appreciation for harm reduction efforts through model project visits.

Russia

IHRD, OSI-Russia, and later OHI, all collaborated with Médecins Sans Frontières and AIDS Foundation East West to select three outstanding projects to conduct practical trainings for other Russian harm reduction projects. The Technical Advisors (TAs) for Russia, working with the Moscow-based harm reduction coordinator, assess the training needs of the projects during site visits and recommend them for training on particular issues. One of the three training sites is then selected to develop a practical, hands-on training for up to 10 participants. These training sites are:

Humanitarian Action, St. Petersburg. This is the most comprehensive harm reduction project in Russia, offering a wide range of services in a large city. Humanitarian Action has over five years of experience offering mobile outreach, needle exchange, HIV testing, counseling, and medical referrals. For more information, contact:

Aleksander Tsekhanovich
Humanitarian Action
Ofitsersky pereulok 6 appt, 2
St. Petersburg, Russia
Phone/fax: 7 812 237 14 95
Email: office@humanitarianaction.org

Tatarstan Ministry of Public Health, Kazan. This project provides excellent outreach services and has secured support from the local government and the Tatarstan Ministry of Internal Affairs. For more information, contact:

Larisa Badrieva
Tatarstan Ministry of Public Health
Vishnevskiy St. 2a
Kazan 420097, Russia
Phone; 7 8432 383 991
Email: obnovl@online.kzn.ru

Garmonia, Balakovo. This project is an excellent example of comprehensive harm reduction services in a small city. For more information, contact:

Ludmila Markaryan
Garmonia
Prospekt Geroyev 32A
Balakovo 413800, Russia
Phone: 7 8457 033 279
Email: harmony@asd.ru

Ukraine

Trainings in Ukraine are cofunded by IHRD, the International Renaissance Foundation–Ukraine, and the HIV/AIDS Alliance, and implemented with assistance from Charity Fund “The Way Home” in Odessa and Charity Foundation “Blagodijinst” in Nikolaev. These two organizations will provide training coordination and trainers, and work together to develop a pool of trainers from several other harm reduction NGO projects. For example, when a training topic is selected, the Odessa and Nikolaev organizations will invite trainers from other projects to assist them, thus building a network of instructors throughout Ukraine.

The Way Home, Odessa. This project serves a large and diverse number of clients, including sex workers, and enjoys widespread support among state health and law enforcement officials. For more information, contact:

Sergey Kostin
The Way Home
42 Bolshaya Arnautskaya Street
Odessa 65011, Ukraine
Phone: 38 0482 429 326
Email: wayhome@farlep.net

Blagodyinost, Nikolaev. This project also works closely with local government, law enforcement, and the media, and runs a prison project in addition to a regular needle exchange. For more information, contact:

Nikolay Gagarkin
Blagodyinost
Prospekt Mira 17, # 287
Nikolaev 54044, Ukraine
Phone: 380 512 21 26 28
Email: fb@aip.mk.ua

Central and Eastern European Harm Reduction Network

For harm reduction activists in a region as large as Central and Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union, there is great need for constant communication and idea sharing. The CEE/NIS Harm Reduction Network (CEEHRN) was founded in 1997, and since then, has been a forum for communication, forming ideas, and open debate. With over 100 member organizations from 27 countries in the region, CEEHRN plays an important part in capacity building and advocacy.

CEEHRN supports network members by providing information and best practices through a Russian and English language list server and bilingual web pages, print newsletters, and e-newsletters. It also translates and distributes harm reduction relevant documents and training materials. CEEHRN addresses harm reduction policy issues through letter-writing campaigns, participation in various meetings, and communicating with governmental officials on behalf of its members.

The Network has extensive materials on harm reduction, sex work, HIV in prisons, as well as a database of harm reduction projects in the region. Its online library includes information on legal aspects of drug use and HIV, situation assessment, substitution treatment, and needle exchange.

For more information, contact:

Anya Sarang
CEEHRN
Vilniaus St. 25-7a, 2600 Vilnius, Lithuania
Phone: 370 5269 1600; Fax: 370 5261 1489
Email: info@ceehrn.org
Website: <http://www.ceehrn.org>

Conferences and Fellowships

Conferences

Organizing and attending conferences and having staff members pursue fellowships are fundamental activities for harm reduction projects that want to become sustainable and build their capacity.

Each year, IHRD and Soros foundations support the organization of several conferences on harm reduction and HIV issues in CEE/FSU and offer scholarships for TAs and harm reduction practitioners to attend international conferences.

A primary objective of supporting conferences is to promote networking among harm reduction practitioners and stakeholders at the regional and international levels. Conferences can help harm reduction projects that feel isolated, and build a community of people working together. Not only do attendees share their resources and expertise with their peers, but they also lobby as a group to enhance the impact of their advocacy work. Conferences provide a unique opportunity for different groups such as government officials, medical personnel, and people living with HIV/AIDS to come together and discuss important issues from their respective points of view.

A further capacity building benefit derived from conferences is that participants can take the knowledge they have gained at a conference back to their organizations and communities and share what they have learned. Andriy Myktyyn, the director of the Solidarity Fund and a city council deputy in Ivano-Frankivsk, Ukraine, described the impact of attending the American Methadone Treatment Association conference in St. Louis:

“I came home full of energy to start a methadone program in Ukraine....Only when doctors, social workers, psychologists, lawyers, the police, and the public understand the problem and the possibilities of treatment will a methadone program succeed. I met with the head narcologist of the Ivano-Frankivsk regional health department, the director of the Regional Center of HIV/AIDS prevention, and the head of the Regional Council. They all expressed eagerness to support a methadone program in Ivano-Frankivsk. I also held a press conference in November about the benefits of methadone treatment.”

IHRD and Soros foundations offer scholarships to attend large international conferences that do not focus solely on harm reduction. In the global AIDS pandemic, the crisis in Africa tends to overshadow the lower prevalence rates in the countries of the former Soviet Union. However, according to UNAIDS, the escalation rate of infection is steepest in the countries of the former Soviet Union. Important action needs to be taken now, and the presence of Eastern European, Russian, and Central Asian harm reduction workers at major

international conferences is a step toward making sure that the impending crisis is not ignored.

“Thanks to a scholarship from IHRD, I was able to attend a large international harm reduction conference in Delhi,” said Anna Pehlivanova, a staff member at the Initiative for Health Foundation, Sofia, Bulgaria. “Before the conference, my thinking was centered only around Sofia, and I believed that everything we did was the best. The international conference opened my mind to different approaches to harm reduction, to world policies, and to different funding opportunities. Since the conference, we have expanded our services to include a drop-in center and a mobile unit for drug users.”

In addition to conferences, IHRD supports and organizes roundtable discussions for senior officials of various countries around harm reduction. IHRD also funds several ongoing networks including the Central and East European Harm Reduction Network (CEEHRN) and two sub-regional networks for projects working with sex workers in Russia and Ukraine.

A listing of IHRD conference activities through 2002 can be found at:
www.soros.org/initiatives/ihrd

Fellowships

The Advocacy Fellowship Program was started in late 2002 by the Gay Men’s Health Crisis (GMHC), the oldest and largest HIV/AIDS not-for-profit organization in the United States. The program brings advocates from Eastern Europe and Central Asia to GMHC’s headquarters in New York City for an intensive six-week program where fellows learn the skills needed to change the HIV/AIDS policies of government, employers, and private institutions such as pharmaceutical companies, to best serve the needs of people living with HIV/AIDS.

By providing intensive, practical advocacy training and networking, IHRD will help the program further the development of a cadre of effective leaders in the overlapping HIV and harm reduction movements. In 2002, the program awarded two fellowships, followed by four more in 2003.

For more information about the Advocacy Fellowship Program, contact:

Gregg Gonsalves, Director of Treatment and Prevention Advocacy
Gay Men’s Health Crisis
Phone: 212 367 1169; Fax: 212 367 1235
Email: greggg@gmhc.org; Website: <http://www.gmhc.org>

or

Matt Curtis
International Harm Reduction Development Program
Open Society Institute
400 West 59th Street, New York, New York 10019 USA
Phone: 212 548 0634; Fax: 212 548 4617
<http://www.soros.org/initiatives/ihrd>

Communications and Literature

IHRD and Soros foundations prepare and fund several publications to strengthen the capacity of projects, promote harm reduction in the region, educate various audiences, and serve as a leverage tool for funding. The majority of publications are issued in both English and Russian and are available at the IHRD website, <http://www.soros.org/initiatives/ihrd>.

IHRD has used different publications to help build capacity and sustainability in a variety of ways. The program's general philosophy and mission is outlined for potential funders, partners, and grantees in *Drugs, AIDS, and Harm Reduction: How to Slow the HIV Epidemic in Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union*.

Another IHRD publication, *Starting and Managing Needle Syringe Programs: A Guide for Central and Eastern Europe and the Newly Independent States of the Former Soviet Union*, written by the Australian harm reduction expert, Dave Burrows, has been a key resource for harm reduction programs implementing needle exchanges.

In addition to writing and funding publications like these, IHRD also publishes a quarterly newsletter, *Harm Reduction News*, and prepares publications supporting IHRD special initiatives.

The newsletter, started in 2002, is an example of an important capacity building tool because it serves as a venue for stakeholders to share information, debate critical issues, pose questions, and suggest solutions. Contributors include IHRD and Soros foundations staff, and international experts on harm reduction.

Each issue of the newsletter focuses on a specific theme such as advocacy, women, HIV in Central Asia, and the harm reduction community. The newsletter also contains news briefs which highlight recent harm reduction project activities and events in the region.

Reports and newsletters such as these play a crucial role in building relationships and exchanging information among harm reduction service providers and advocates as well as increasing project sustainability by attracting support from new funders and stakeholders.



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