

RECOMMENDATIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED FOR THE NEW BARENTS PROGRAMME PERIOD

The recommendations and lessons learned, composed from the feedback of the Barents HIV/ AIDS Programme and Children and Youth at Risk Programme, aim to increase the sustainability of the work planned for the future period of the Barents Cooperation Programme. General recommendations and lessons learned of the work done as well as programme-specific, more detailed comments are as follows.

General recommendations and lessons learnt

1. Stability of the Cooperation Programme structure as well as that of programme structures and a clear definition of the mandate support the sustainability of the work.
2. Capacity building is to be continued with an emphasis on prevention and management.
3. Adequate exchange of information and dissemination of good practices at national and international level on cross-administrative basis must be ensured.
4. User involvement is to be supported and a strategy how to promote it should be drafted.
5. Local or regional anchorage of programme activities should be ensured and in the Russian Federation regional activities need to be supported by federal contact points.
6. Representation of indigenous peoples in the programme work should be encouraged.
7. Monitoring and evaluation of programme activities must be strengthened by statistics and research results.
8. Visibility of work should be promoted both at local, regional and central government levels.
9. Coordination between national and international activities and accumulation of knowledge must be ensured.

HIV/ AIDS Programme

Programme-specific recommendations and lessons learned from the Barents HIV/ AIDS Programme below are based partly on the monitoring report prepared by Ali Arsalo in 2008, and they have been implemented since then. The evaluation of the Barents HIV/ AIDS Programme by Professor Pauli Leinikki was implemented in 2011 and the key messages of the evaluation are also included in the list of recommendations and lessons learnt.

1. Main focus on prevention.

Particular emphasis has been put into prevention of most vulnerable and hard-to-reach groups such as injecting drug users and people close to them. In addition to injecting drug users, prevention activities should be targeted to other vulnerable groups, such as sex workers, prisoners, migrants and youth.

There is an urgent need to organize systematic preventive work to reduce the risk in HIV infection transmitted due to injecting drug use among prisoners (e.g. in the Murmansk region).

2. Support to easy access low-threshold centres and outreach activities should be extended to meet the challenges that the widening epidemic will pose in the near future. Promotion of anonymous testing with easy access and quick results should be promoted. Linking such activities with research should be encouraged to find the optimal algorithms and best access to at-risk populations.

3. Clear need for capacity building in programme planning and management. Planning by Logical Framework Approach (LFA).

Capacity building has been supported by training and exchange visits. LFA increases the partners' commitment.

4. Sustainability.

Political support is needed; a written agreement with local authorities in the beginning of the project; local authorities must be informed about progress of the project.

New activities are to be launched within existing institutions: ensures continuation of activities after completing the project.

Exit strategy should be there from the beginning of the project.

5. Coordination with other local and international actors. Inter-sectoral collaboration, also in the form of data exchange is needed.

Platform for international collaboration should be maintained and developed further. Here, coordination and regular meetings of the steering committee are the most important tools. Also the link with the Northern Dimension Partnership should be maintained. Activities should include high level training in the forms of seminars, exchange visits and collaboration in working with media and involving NGOs, AIDS centres and narcological dispensaries. Identification of other foreign organisations and projects working in the same field and their inclusion under the Barents umbrella is recommended.

6. Local ownership and enthusiasm. Support to peer training and voluntary work should be continued and promoted. Active involvement and participation of the local partner(s) in planning and implementation of the project are needed.

7. Best practices of the AIDS Centres as guidelines for further activities should be collected. Dissemination of the guidelines to other regions would be useful.

8. Projects supporting independent academic research and networking of academic institutions should be promoted. Support to local AIDS Centres in developing studies for continuous monitoring of the actual HIV-AIDS-TB-IDU situation.

9. Dialogue concerning legal and economic issues should be continued and promoted.

10. High confidentiality: the clients have to be able to fully trust the personnel.

Client survey at Murmansk Low Threshold Support Centre is to be utilized as an example.

11. Collaboration with mass media. It is also important to combat against discrimination and stigma of HIV-infected people. Permanent contacts with local journalists are productive to good results.

Children and Youth at Risk Programme (CYAR)

The recommendations and lessons learnt from the Children and Youth at Risk Programme are based on the discussion of the 6th Steering Committee Meeting, May 10th 2011 in Tromsø.

1. Increase the multilateral profile of the programme on project level, including representation from indigenous people.

2. The composition of the Steering Committee (SC) – its members, mandate and stability.

The SC experienced a high member turn-over rate for the first years, and is composed of members from very different organizational types and levels.

Regional SC member should have a clear mandate to act as coordinator and secure multi-agency involvement in CYAR activities, establish good contact with both local authorities and relevant local organizations and institutions. Should have experience from international cooperation.

Chair and Co-chair should consist of one Nordic and one Russian partner, with formalised mandate from the Barents partner.

3. Funding of activities. The CYAR programme did not receive any funding from the starting point. The Working group should assist the SC in fundraising for the program related activities. A minimum partner funding should be secured, to cover the costs of SC (member) activities (meetings of the SC).

4. Continuation of CYAR the Support Project – to maintain the knowledge-based profile of CYAR and the ongoing competence sharing. To build on existing structures, competence and network outcomes gained through the CYAR programme.

Continuous assessment is furthermore an important part of project management and is vital for long-term projects. Any long-term project would benefit from regular evaluation of project activities (seminars, conferences and courses).

5. Broaden the perspective of the program with special attention to a) prevention activities/programmes b) alternative family care and c) integration of ongoing cooperation projects/efforts on the topic of juvenile delinquents in the CYAR Programme

6. Improve local anchorage of CYAR related activities.

a) Systematic meetings of the SC with local and regional authorities are essential in order to coordinate CYAR plans with regional plans.

b) Use of cooperation agreements securing good exit project strategies. Project sustainability depends on political support. It is necessary to engage in cooperation agreements with local/regional authorities in the beginning of the project, to secure all-level-ownership to activities and results.

7. Consider use of LFA in planning activities: the SC should take LFA into use in future operations of the programme.

8. Systematic contact and cooperation with research units.

Projects will benefit from involving research organisations. Project owners need to know the results from new practice implementation and whether methods are effective and applicable in local environment. Scientific publications in a native (Russian) language are crucial for any involved in a project as well for other potential readers.

9. User involvement strategy, participation from youth organizations are needed.

10. Coordinating/contact point on Russian federal level is needed.

It is a good experience from the CYAR programme to have established contact with authorities at federal level on the subject of children and youth, for legitimacy and coordination of activities. This link should be strengthened.

11. Information strategy, more systematic use of local media and strengthened information flow within the programme.