

Adopted on 27 March 2008

'Children and Youth at Risk in the Barents region' Co-operation Programme 2008–2011

The Barents Euro-Arctic Council
Ad-hoc Working Group on Health and related
Social issues

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1. Definitions

BEAC – Barents Euro-Arctic Council

WGHS – Working Group on Health and Related Social Issues

CYAR – referring to Children and Youth at Risk project/programme

CBSS – Council of the Baltic Sea States

WGCC – Working Group for Cooperation on Children at Risk

NCM – Nordic Council of Ministers

NDPHS – Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Well-being

2. Introduction

At the Luosto meeting of October 2005 the WGHS made a decision in principle on developing a programme focused on *children and youth at risk* (CYAR). On December 7th 2006 a project group for programme development were established, under the leadership of the current chairs of the WGHS; Murmansk region and Norway. The initiation of a framework programme for CYAR is a response to a concerning development for marginalized groups of the child and youth population in the Barents region.

The CYAR programme is aiming to improve life conditions for the target group through

- I. Increased co-operative actions in general (information exchange, networking), and
- II. Project activities in particular.

The project group's mandate has been to propose a draft programme (A) for improvement of international co-operation and co-ordination efforts towards CYAR. There is no specific programme budget attached to CYAR, the issue of project financing will be up to each BEAC member to decide upon. The project group further presents a proposal for establishing a coordinative body responsible for implementation and running of the CYAR programme (B). Where possible, there should however be a link between a coordinative body for CYAR in the Barents region and the national processes of project funding to secure good coordination, targeting and furthermore avoid duplicating efforts.

There are several previous and current structures and actions with relevance to the development of a children and youth at risk programme, where these have been taken into special consideration in the work process;

- The structure and experiences of the Barents HIV/AIDS programme
- The CBSS 'Childrens Unit' organization
- The 2005 evaluation of the NCM 'Nordic Action Plan for Children and Youth at risk in the Adjacent Areas'

- The regional experiences on outcomes of international cooperation towards CYAR in the Barents region during previous health programmes, and finally
- The regions themselves stating co-operation preferences and plans for development of the social sector

As stated in the NCM report '*Children in our neighbourhood (2005)*';

'Children and young adults experience a greater risk of poverty and social exclusion than the average population. One of the major challenges is to develop functioning institutions with a professional staff to deal with this challenge'.

Further, in the evaluation of the Nordic Action Plan Programme most projects leaders rated competence development in the social sphere as the most effective way to make a difference towards children and youth at risk.

In this proposal the project group has emphasized that;

- all efforts directed towards CYAR should be aimed at strengthening the public services ability to support adequate assistance at the right time to the individual child.
- the most important and key-word in ongoing realization of the programme is "family". Every effort should be penetrated by the idea of sustaining, strengthening, recreating or in worst case – substitution of family.

In the CYAR effort to come it must be a goal to turn the initiation of new projects from goals of the individual organization more to be in accordance with the BEACs framework priorities and strategies for the region as a whole. This requires

- a first-hand knowledge about the situation for the target group in the region
- the identification of gaps in public services
- knowledge of well-documented interventions for different target groups
- a hands-on approach to initiating and coordination of international co-operative efforts in the upcoming period.

In addition to initiate new projects, the focus should be on ensuring ongoing projects and co-operations, as well as endorse dissemination activities.

Some CYAR-Programme expectations.....

- Increase in information and network activities concerning CYAR in the Barents region
- Increase in project activities focusing on human resources and competence building
- Increase in number of long-term and multi-sectoral oriented projects
- Increase in number of projects directed towards best practice and well documented interventions
- Improve coordination of projects towards CYAR
- Increase dissemination of effective interventions, both within and between regions

This is expected to give the following results on the ground;

- Higher level of professional competence on prioritized areas
- Increase of early and adequate interventions in risk families
- Reinforcement of parental resources in risk families
- Improve opportunities for a successful integration in society for marginalized and institutionalized children and youth by improvement of social skills
- Increase in number of children living in family based care
- Increase staff focus on and knowledge of the rights of the individual child

In order to move from goals to realization the project group furthermore proposes that a separate *programme coordination unit* linked to the WGHS should be established, to secure day-to-day *initiating, coordinative* and *monitoring* activities in the region within this field.

Strategies for positive change:

Risk-focused

-prevent or reduce risk/risk factors

Asset-focused

-increase resources or access to resources, individual and system level.

Process-focused

-restore, mobilize or gather the power of human resource systems

3. Background and mandate

On December 7th 2006 in Murmansk the WGHS decided upon establishment of a project group on development of a framework CYAR programme.

Mandate

The mandate for the project group was as follows;

“

Mandate for the project group on Children and youth at risk

The WGHS agrees on the principals presented in the Norwegian-Murmansk proposal for a frame programme for CYAR presented at the meeting of Dec.7th 2006. The WGHS decides that the work with developing a CYAR programme shall continue in accordance with the presented framework. In order to secure a broad participation in the further developing process, the WGHS decides to establish a project group on the CYAR programme consisting of 8 members. Norway, Sweden, Finland and each of the Northwest-Russian regions should within the year present one representative each for the project group.

The project group will be coordinated by the Norwegian and Murmansk participants, who will be in charge of meeting arrangements and project group communication. The project groups mandate is to develop the CYAR programme in detail, based upon the existing programme framework. The project group shall present a proposal for a CYAR programme at the last WHGS meeting in 2007, and no later than Dec. 1st 2007.

The project group will report on progress to the WHGS at scheduled WGHS meetings, the first report is to be presented an April 2007.

All travel and accomodation expences in relation to the project group's work will be covered within the Barents cooperation.

Murmansk, Dec. 7th, 2006.

“

Understanding of the mandate:

The project group's understanding of the mandate is;

- A. To develop a framework for the CYAR programme, containing;
- A broad situation description of CYAR in the Barents region; relevant statistics, regional policy and professional tendencies in the field, cooperation status, - experiences and future goals,
 - A closer definition of target groups
 - Definition of objectives and key strategies for a CYAR programme
 - Priorities for the programme period
- B. Give a proposal for a professional and administrative structure for implementation and running of a CYAR programme

Participants

BEAC member	Name	Position
Murmansk (leadership)	Elena Viktorova	Deputy chairman, Work and Social Committee
Norway (leadership)	Pål Christian Bergstrøm	Senior adviser, Regional Office for Children, Youth and Family affairs, Northern Norway
Arkhangelsk	Valery Vakulenko	Deputy director of Social protection department
Komi	Konstantin Sazhin	Leader, Agency on Social development
Karelia	Vera Senjukova	Vice Minister, Ministry of Health and Social development
Nenets	Mrs Zaitseva	Leader, Social protection department
Finland	Merja Laitinen	Dr.Soc.sc. Researcher, Univ.of Lapland
Sweden	Lena McElwee	National Board of Health and Welfare

Meetings

Protocol on meetings:

It has been arranged four project meetings; on Jan 31st-Feb 2nd, Murmansk, April 9th-11th Tromsø, May 29th-31st, Tromsø, October 16th, Murmansk. The leadership has held additional meetings with relevant actors in Stockholm and Oslo.

According to the mandate decided on Dec. 7th 2006, the project group would have a full calendar year for developing a proposal. As the protocol from the December meeting were delayed, the naming of the formal regional representatives did not take place until April 2007,

and the work got started in May. Nevertheless, there has been contact with all member regions and contributions have been made. The last project meeting will take place on Oct 16th, where a broad consensus on this draft are sought before the proposal is delivered to the WGHS on Oct 17th.

4. Situation overview - Children and youth at risk in the Barents region

The basis for an action plan towards CYAR must be a common understanding of the situation for the target group in the area. In order to strengthen the focus and activities directed towards children and youth at risk in the Barents region, it is necessary to have a broad picture at hand of the current situation for the target group. Statistics, development trends and ongoing activities directed towards this group is crucial information.

The task of assembling and compare data for children and youth at risk in the Barents region is however an elaborate one. Members of the project group and the Norwegian Barents Secretariat when asked, acknowledge the fact that there is a gap when it comes to assembled statistics for this field in the Barents Co-operation. The gathering and continuously updating of data is crucial for guiding of efforts in the right direction. As the project groups efforts in this area has resulted in fragments of information rather than a coherent situation overview, we propose that the task of assembling, compare and exchange information of both living conditions and co-operation efforts in the region should be an integrated part of running the CYAR-programme.

Information and statistics have been assembled from each member region trough the project, but it is at this point not possible to create a comparable overview or analysis. This work should continue as an integrated part of running a CYAR programme, but without the requirement of comparability in all cases.

5. Definition of target groups for a CYAR programme

Children and youth at risk is a broad description. WGCC's definition; '*CYAR ..being children whose rights are not adequately respected and where the immediate adult world do not manage to secure the safety and/or the wellbeing of the child or young person*'.

By children and youth we refer to the age group between 0-18 years old. Children and youth *at risk* would be;

- Children and youth without parental care; 'unaccompanied children', orphans
- Children.. in risk families (abuse/neglect, alcohol misuse, crime, poverty..)
- Children.. with indicated/expressed behaviour problems
- Children.. who commit crimes (detention centres, correctional facilities etc)
- Children in risk of/developed alcohol and/or drug misuse problems
- Teenagers who have children
- Children with disabilities
- Ethnic minorities

All of these would and should be prone as target groups in a CYAR effort. The project group has sought a narrow approach as of target groups, where the programme should be directed towards the most vulnerable groups in this population. This is a conclusion made also from

the uncertainty of level of funding; if there have to be exercised strong priority in project selection, the most vulnerable of children and youth should be reached.

6. Priorities in the programme period - concretizations

What can a CYAR programme address and what not?

The project group proposes a programme with a special focus directed towards *the social sector* and its influence on the living conditions of children and youth. Although, acknowledging the negative effect lack of coordination between sectors has on children's living conditions, the importance of obtaining a cross-sector perspective should be stressed. Projects involving partners solely from other sectors should however not be endorsed. Initiatives should emphasise the involvement of social sector organizations, and involvement of other sectors channelled through this.

The NGOs have an important role in implementing the programme. They are a necessary source of information concerning the situation for children and young people. NGOs based in local communities should be relied upon for project cooperation and for giving input into the assessment of how children and young people could best be assisted. NGOs can point to gaps in services and allow project designs to target areas where child protection services have failed to recognise patterns creating risk.

All activities within the CYAR programme shall take into account gender differences, i.e. the different circumstances facing boys and girls in the region.

Children and young people themselves shall as far as possible be involved both in developing the CYAR programme in its implementation and in the projects run under the programme.

As regards priorities, a special focus could be made during one period on one or two prioritized target groups, this could be revised at any time and attention could be drawn to other groups in the next period to come.

I. Prioritized target groups:

- Families and children in a dangerous social situation
- Orphans, unaccompanied children
- Institutionalized children and youth
- Young offenders
- Children and youth with indicated or expressed behaviour problems
- Children with disabilities

II. Prioritized project partners:

Although emphasising a multi-sector approach, special attention should be given to social sector activities and involvement of the public social sector in project designs.

- Public social agencies at federal, regional or municipal level
- Public agencies with responsibilities for children and youth, education, health, punitive, etc

- Non-Governmental and non-profit organisations with a clear child rights profile in programmes and activities. The focus should be to cooperate with organisations that implement projects directly benefitting children and youth at risk
- Universities and college institutions only where involved with an action-oriented project

III. Prioritized professional fields:

Some fields of competence that need special attention in the period, where *family and network perspectives* should penetrate all of these;

- Strengthening of **parental resources**, family intervention programmes
- Continue developing systems for professional **foster care services**. Long-term perspective; training of professionals, adequate recruitment of families, follow-up and supervision systems after placement.
- **Social skills training** for rehabilitation of institutionalized children and youth, preparation for leaving care and support to self-management
- **Monitoring** of the rights of the child, supervision mechanisms

7. Main objectives of CYAR:

The profile of the CYAR Programme; an effort in the upcoming period based on

A) Enhanced information exchange and network building activities, and

B) Project partnerships

A co-operation effort focusing both on readying the ground for project partnerships which is competence-based and directed towards strengthening the official aid system for the target groups, and networking, information exchange between official actors, research environments and NGOs working in the region.

Contexts should be created where child protection services, psychological support staff, child focused NGOs and law enforcement may co-operate in individual cases and keep each other informed on matters relating to children and youth at risk

Main objectives for a long-term effort on CYAR in the Barents region:

○ **Objective 1)**

Improve **situation overview** of CYAR status in the Barents region

-monitor life condition development, statistics

-overview: service interventions, regional planning, preferred methods/programs.

-co-operation efforts. Project catalogue.

○ **Objective 2)**

Increase **competence building** activities in public services, emphasizing a multi-sectoral approach

○ **Objective 3)**

Functioning and effective **coordination** of cooperation efforts towards CYAR in the Barents region

Additional objectives:

Avoid duplication efforts

Effective planning procedures

○ **Objective 4)**

Increase efficiency in services towards target groups through knowledge and use of **well-documented interventions/methods**

○ **Objective 5)**

Increase **dissemination activities** of effective interventions

○ **Objective 6)**

Strengthening the rights of the individual child through enhanced focus on developing **supervision mechanisms**

Action plan;

Objective 1)

Improve **situation overview** of CYAR in the Barents region

-life conditions. Statistics. Source:

-service interventions, regional plans, competence in use. Source:

-cooperation efforts. Project catalogue updated. Source:

Actions:

A1: Develop form for regional input on CYAR indicators, annual assembly.

A2: Develop web-site for CYAR, under BEAC site, data base, statistics. Correlate with NDPHS data base

Objective 2)

Increase public **competence building** activities towards specifies target groups, emphasizing a multi-sector approach

A1: Information meetings with potential project partners and donors

A2: Prioritize human resource projects

Objective 3)

Improve **coordination** of cooperation efforts towards CYAR in the Barents region

Avoid duplication efforts

A1: Establish coordinative body, network-building with relevant actors

A2: Information meetings with potential project partners and donors

A3: Updated project catalogue

A4: Establish a link between recommendation and funding of projects

A:5 Identify contact nodes on the regional level and share with these experiences on how a context ensuring transparent co-operation with child protection services, psychological support staff, NGOs and law enforcement may be initiated and maintained.

Objective 4)

Increase efficiency in services towards target groups through knowledge and use of **well-documented interventions/methods**

A1: Develop (and update) 'catalogue' on methods available and in use with documented effect in the region towards specific target groups (f.i.; foster care, behavioural modification, social skills training etc)

Objective 5)

Increase **dissemination activities** of best practice/well-documented interventions

A1: Develop status for previous and ongoing competence exchange cooperations with method/program implementation profile

A2: Arrange conference on project results, extract factors influencing results (negative and positive)

A3: Request project leaders of follow-ups of positive result projects, dissemination

Objective 6)

Strengthening the rights of the individual child through enhanced focus on developing **supervision mechanisms**

A1: Barents conference on supervision mechanisms

A2: Establish contact with regional ombudsmen, meetings

8. Profile on CYAR-Projects;

The project group has asked each region both to specify what kind of competence and what kind of project structure they would prefer. As for project profile, these are some common features;

Preferral of projects...

- with aims of capacity building and raise of competence quality level
- anchored at local, regional or national authorities
- with multi-sector approach, supporting projects within the social, health, educational, justice sectors and the intersections between them
- that identify and disseminate methods/programmes with documented effect in the region.
- that state how they are linked to regional long-term plans.
- explains how the project can strengthen public services in the area
- emphasizing long-term cooperation

Furthermore, the projects to be preferred should also aim at
- direct support to children and young people at risk as these will inform the entire programme on feasibility of a specific approach and gaps;

- on equal footing bringing together public agencies, governmental bodies and NGOs.

9. CYAR 2008-2011: Project plan - implementation and running of the programme

A proposal on the structure will be presented separately

(In order to ensure that the programme is properly implemented, economical support for CYAR projects should be given from the member regions. There are nonetheless need for some sort of programme control, for making adjustments and coordination of efforts during the period.

The programme administration should be connected to the WGHS organization and activities as far as possible, but additional structures must be established and actions taken.

We suggest establishing a coordinative body for CYAR, attaining day-to-day focus and activities, and reporting to the WGHS.

It should:

- develop a structure of network points (professional child care services/policy) in each nation/region dedicated to CYAR.
- serve as a link between these and project coordination and funding activities
- serve as a link to programme stakeholders
- serve as a link to other initiatives and actors in the field
- organize gathering and exchange of information in the region
- initiate and organize meetings, conferences on CYAR co-operation topics
- provide assistance to applicants
- secure dissemination of information about the programme

This body should consist of members with intimate knowledge of the social situation in the Barents region, professional services in the field and experience from international cooperation. There should be special experience and competence on the field. The body should give advice to the WGHS, and act on strategies and activity plans.

This organizational unit will secure a link between the WGHS and CYAR forums and decision making when it comes to programme development and funding of public funded projects.

The project description for establishing such a unit (A 'Childrens Unit' for the CYAR programme) follows the draft proposal as an attachment (B).)

10. Cooperation and coordination with other initiatives

These are important co-operation structures for running a CYAR programme:

The Barents HIV/AIDS-programme

The Barents Working Groups on Youth Policy, on Youth Issues and the Barents Regional Youth Council

The WGCC, CBSS Working Group for Cooperation on Children at Risk.

Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM), NCM regional offices.

UN organisations including but not limited to WHO, UNICEF programme in the Russian Federation aiming at strengthening the child protection services

Special efforts directed towards children with disabilities.

Relevant Expert Groups of the NDPHS, primarily the SIHLWA (Social Inclusion, Healthy Life Styles and Work Ability) and Prison Health Expert Groups

International and local NGOs active in the Barents region, including youth organizations
Special efforts directed towards trafficking of children and young people

Special efforts directed towards combating sexual exploitation of children

References:

Children and young adults in the adjacent areas NCM, 1998'

Framework action plan for children and young adults in the Nordic regions adjacent areas, NCM 2004

For children in our neighbourhood, NCM 2005

The Barents HIV/AIDS programme and project structure