

# ADVOCACY

## SUCCESS in RUSSIA

In the words of Margaret Mead, “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed it is the only thing that ever has.” Indeed, in POLICY/Russia’s corner of the world, giving a small group of committed citizens the opportunity to participate in an intensive Training-of-Trainers (TOT) workshop in network building and advocacy has led to impressive and unanticipated results.



*TOT participants and facilitators, February 2002*

From February 18–27, 2002, POLICY/Russia, with funding from CEDPA’s Women’s Leadership Program, provided just such an opportunity for 18 women representing different health and social sectors from Armenia, Russia, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan. Word of the TOT spread among POLICY’s partners in Russia, and POLICY was asked to hold a shorter, condensed version of the TOT for 12 participants from six regions of Russia. Taken together, alumni from these two events, often with little or no additional financial support from POLICY, achieved notable successes in their respective fields in a short period of time. A snapshot of their efforts is provided below.

### *Sharing Knowledge and Skills Across the Region*

One year after the February 2002 TOT, the 18 alumni had designed and delivered 70 workshops and trained 1,080 people from four countries in network building and advocacy. Only a small subset of these workshops was conducted with financial support from POLICY. And just one year after the “mini”-TOT of December 2002, the 12 participants had conducted 36 workshops for 892 participants. None of these workshops were initiated or funded by POLICY. The next round of assessments will surely show that hundreds of additional people have been trained. While the numbers are impressive, the stories behind the numbers give them real meaning.

“Our society now has a great need for advocacy training and that is why your training was in the right place and at the right time.”

TOT Participant

Planting the Seeds for Change

## Organizing for Change

During the course of POLICY's work with the Russian Reproductive Health Advocacy Network (created with POLICY support in November 1998), it became increasingly evident that members' advocacy strategies were having a greater impact in the regions. Together with Russia's move toward decentralized health policy decision making and USAID's regionalized approach, POLICY/Russia shifted toward a regionally-focused approach to advocacy training. Accordingly, POLICY awarded core-funded small grants to five of the participants of the February 2002 TOT to assemble, train, and coordinate new reproductive health advocacy networks in their respective regions. By summer 2003, they had formed five new networks (in Russia's Far East Region, in Altay Kray, and in the Tver, Tomsk, and Perm Oblasts); trained their colleagues in advocacy; and were well on their way to forming partnerships with public sector colleagues and planning their first advocacy efforts.

However, networks are forming even without POLICY seed money. For instance, an alumnus from the December 2002 mini-TOT formed a network devoted to youth in Penza, Russia, which achieved interim policy success in the area of healthy lifestyle education programs at the municipal level; a dormant network in Armenia was



*Reproductive Health Advocacy Network in Tver Oblast*



*Reproductive Health Advocacy Network of Perm Oblast*

revitalized and became the "Women's Network on Conflict and Change Management"; and alumni from Uzbekistan created the network "Youth Net" to involve youth in addressing youth issues.

## Working Together:

### The Federal Network and Regional, Kray, and Oblast Counterparts

Reproductive Health Advocacy Network in Tver Oblast



Reproductive Health Advocacy Network in Altay Kray "Future of Altay"



Reproductive Health Advocacy Network in Perm Oblast



Russian Reproductive Health Advocacy Network (RRHAN)



Preservation of Reproductive Health and Realization of Reproductive Rights of Young People in the Far East Region



Reproductive Health Advocacy Network in Tomsk Region

## *As Advocacy Takes Hold, Policy Change is Well Underway*

The TOT alumni have successfully affected a wide array of policy changes at institutional, municipal, oblast, and regional levels. Whether they have drafted programs anew, resurrected forgotten policies, pulled together a draft law, or pushed for the financing of existing but unfunded programs, the collective efforts of the alumni and their public sector colleagues have already resulted in the following changes, with news of more progress on the way:

- The rural poor in the Kozevnikovo area of Tomsk Oblast now has access to free public transport to antenatal visits and discounts on vitamins and anti-anemia medication.
- The Head of the Tomsk Oblast Health Department issued Decree #166 on August 22, 2002, prescribing all city medical institutions to hire prevention specialists and providing ongoing support to increase the information level of these specialists.
- The Health and Education Departments of the Barnaul City Administration issued Decree #307 on November 15, 2002, increasing the screening and early diagnosis of reproductive health problems in young boys and adolescent men.
- The Head of the Rayon Administration adopted and signed Decision #132 on January 28, 2003, implementing the program, “Reproductive Health Care of Youth and Adolescents of Kozevnikovo Rayon.”
- The Tomsk Oblast Healthy Child 2003 Program that was passed by the Tomsk Oblast State Duma



*Reproductive Health Advocacy Network in Tomsk Region*



*Tomsk region network members collaborate with public sector colleagues*

on March 27, 2003, and approved by the oblast governor, included important reproductive health components.

- The Barnaul City Duma adopted the Municipal Interagency Program, “Reproductive Health of Youth and Teenagers of Barnaul for Years 2003–2006,” on June 5, 2003, by Decision # 376, with the objective of improving and preserving the reproductive health of children and youth.
- Five Kray-level decrees issued by the governor of Khabarovsk Kray, in July 2002, March 2003, July 2003, September 2003, and November 2003, included new initiatives regarding youth, adolescent reproductive health, family planning, STI prevention, and healthy lifestyle skills.
- The Head of Tomsk City Educational Department approved the “Health and Development of Youth for 2003–2004” on September 2, 2003, to decrease the level of drug abuse and prevent unhealthy behavior of youth and adolescents.
- The Heads of the Tomsk City Departments of Education and Health Care approved the Target Program “Healthy Child 2003–2005” on September 24, 2003, to improve health care and encourage healthy lifestyles among students.
- On October 29, 2003, the Legislative Council of Solikamsk City in Perm Oblast approved the City Targeted Program “Reproductive Health of Solikamsk City Population for 2004–2007,” focusing on family planning and reproductive health education and services.

## Institutionalizing Advocacy

Perhaps as important as the policy change has been the evolving process of institutionalizing advocacy courses and training in other social projects and in various institutions of learning. These represent the alumni's efforts. None of the following initiatives has been the result of additional POLICY funding. For instance:

- An alumnus from Novosibirsk, with financial support from a UN project, conducted workshops on developing networks of HIV/AIDS information centers in Volgograd and Barnaul.
- An alumna and other trainers from the Russian National Office of the Association of Crisis Centers for Women conducted seminars on network building for women's organizations in Tashkent, Uzbekistan.
- A participating NGO started publishing a magazine on the topic of homeless children; the first two editions included advocacy issues in this area. In addition, this group developed and designed an Internet portal, devoted to advocacy issues and network building within the context of the homeless children's project.
- Uzbek participants created two distance learning manuals entitled *Textbook for Distance Learning Education on Advocacy* and *Textbook for Distance Learning Education on Building of the Networks*. Both are available in Russian and in Uzbek. They also incorporated an advocacy training course into a European Commission technical assistance program.
- A TOT participant created an Armenian language version of the *Networking for Policy Change: An Advocacy Training Manual*, entitled *Defense of Public Interests*. The context for this version is broader than reproductive health, and the examples presented in the manual have been modified with Armenian examples.



*Preservation of Reproductive Health and Realization of Reproductive Rights of Young People in the Far East Region*



*Reproductive Health Advocacy Network in Altay Kray: "Future of Altay"*

- The co-facilitator of the TOT and Director of the Center of NGO Support in Moscow launched a distance-learning course in advocacy within the framework of the Center's NGO Management School. Although this course was envisioned within the center's proposal to USAID in 2001, the director's collaboration with POLICY and CEDPA influenced his understanding of the complex issues related to advocacy, thereby shaping his vision of the course.
- TOT alumni with teaching positions at various institutions of learning in Ishevsk, Khabarovsk, Moscow, Voronez, Krasnodar, and Novosibirsk routinely, and to an increasing degree, include lectures on advocacy in their courses.



POLICY is funded by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and is implemented by the Futures Group, in collaboration with The Centre for Development and Population Activities (CEDPA) and Research Triangle Institute.

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