

This inaugural issue of the Network Public Health Program (NPHP) e-Newsletter highlights our work during the months of April, May, June, and July 2005. Subsequent e-newsletters will be quarterly. We encourage information sharing to explore potential linkages, hear your advice, and receive feedback. Suggestions and input to improve this newsletter are welcome. Please contact Ellen Liu at eliu@sorosny.org

Advocacy on Our Issues:

Victory for Needle Exchange and Rights of Drug Users at UNAIDS Meeting

IHRD and other advocates for evidence-based HIV prevention won a victory in Geneva on June 29 at the 17th Programme Coordinating Board Meeting of UNAIDS, when the United States endorsed a UN strategy for global HIV prevention that included mention of access to sterile injection equipment and the human rights of drug users. The group had split after U.S. officials insisted that all references to needle exchange be removed. OSI joined a coalition of groups urging the U.S. not to turn its ban on federal funding for needle exchange into the global standard, and worked with delegates from other countries to emphasize the dangers of replacing science with ideology at UNAIDS. Confronting unanimous support for needle exchange by other country delegates, a letter from Congressman Henry Waxman (D-CA) highlighting the evidence for the approach and a *New York Times* editorial calling the U.S. stance "breathtakingly dangerous," U.S. officials withdrew their opposition. See: http://www.soros.org/initiatives/ihrd/news/pcb_20050630 Contact: Daniel Wolfe, dwolfe@sorosny.org

Building Support for Worldwide Hospice and Palliative Care

The International Palliative Care Initiative (IPCI) funded 24 advocacy grants to hospice and palliative organizations in 20 countries in Central and Eastern Europe, the former Soviet Union, Mongolia, and Africa to raise awareness and understanding of the need and importance of hospice and palliative care. The grants will also support advocacy activities around the first annual World Hospice and Palliative Care Day, which will take place on October 8, 2005. Contact: Mary Callaway, mcallaway@sorosny.org

Pushing for Changes in USAID Policies Tied to Global AIDS Funding

The new Sexual Health and Rights Program (SHARP) has been working on policy issues related to sex workers' rights, particularly advocating that USAID change its new policy demanding that all grantees sign a "pledge" about prostitution and trafficking in order to receive funds. SHARP is collaborating with the Urban Justice Institute, the International Lesbian and Gay Association, and other advocacy groups to organize a conference in the fall that will further link domestic and international sex worker rights efforts and help promote shared strategies and best practices. Contact: Sue Simon, ssimon@sorosny.org

Methadone Added to 14th Essential Drug List

On June 30, the World Health Organization approved the addition of methadone and buprenorphine to the 14th Model (Complementary) List of Essential Medicines. The inclusion of substitution treatments on the 14th Essential Drugs List represents the culmination of a year of concerted advocacy by supporters of harm reduction and HIV treatment, including IHRD, the Central and Eastern European Harm Reduction Network, the International Harm Reduction Association, and networks of people living with HIV who had pressed WHO to recognize methadone as a proven and effective treatment for opiate addiction and a key therapy used as an adjunct to antiretroviral treatment for drug users. While "complementary" medicines require some specialized training, advocates are now pressing to turn the WHO recommendation into increased access for programs "on the ground." Contact: Anna Moshkova, amoshkova@sorosny.org

Addressing Roma Health Inequalities

Throughout the spring, NPHP worked with a team of consultants to produce a regional study on the Roma Health Mediator (RHM) program in use among many Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries. The RHM program is one of the most visible efforts of CEE governments to address the fact that Roma have lower health

status than the majority population. All countries participating in the Decade of Roma Inclusion have included the RHM program as part of their strategy to address health issues. The study will provide useful information for national government and other health planners to address inequities in the health status of Roma. The goal is to document current practices, assess impact, and make recommendations about the successful implementation of RHM programs. The study was conducted in Romania, Serbia, Bulgaria, Kosovo, and Finland and will be released in fall 2005. Contact: Heather Doyle, hdoyle@sorosny.org

Monitoring and Accountability:

Public Health Watch Launches HIV/AIDS Monitoring Project

Public Health Watch (PHW) kicked off its HIV/AIDS Monitoring Project on July 25-26 with an initial meeting of six country researchers from Nicaragua, Senegal, Ukraine, the United States, Vietnam, and Zambia. PHW's partner organizations on international advocacy efforts (FUNDAR, Panos, ICASO, and the World AIDS Campaign) also attended the meeting to discuss greater civil society participation in the UNGASS 2006 process and to brainstorm other advocacy opportunities. On August 29, a group of advisors to the US researcher will be meeting in the OSI New York office to offer input and suggestions for the development of the report on U.S. HIV/AIDS policy. Contact: Helena Choi, hchoi@sorosny.org

Tracking Global Health Funds

In collaboration with other major donors, OSI will fund the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) to conduct a three-year, multi-country tracking study that will measure the impact of global health initiatives, including the Global Fund for AIDS, TB and Malaria, the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, and the World Bank's Multi-country HIV/AIDS Program for Africa. The study will assess the real impact at the district level of global health initiatives on the lives of marginalized or vulnerable populations. Contact: Noah Simmons, nsimmons@sorosny.org

Cross-Cutting Issues:

Connecting Harm Reduction Experts with Schools of Public Health

"Licit and Illicit Drugs: The Training, Research, Policy and Advocacy Roles of Schools of Public Health" was the topic of a recent OSI Seminar organized by NPHP and the Faculty of Public Health at the University of Medicine in Varna, Bulgaria, on June 8-10. The seminar convened international experts in harm reduction, drug policy, and tobacco control, who joined representatives of schools of public health from CEE/fSU countries to identify potential areas of collaboration. The concluding presentation convincingly proposed a definition of harm reduction that includes tobacco control: cessation and maintenance are two points on the same continuum of care. For conference agenda, see <http://health.osf.lt/en/seminars/>. Contact: Noah Simmons, nsimmons@sorosny.org

Identifying Legal Priorities for Harm Reduction

On June 15, public health, human rights, and legal experts from Soros Foundations attended "Law on the Books, Law on the Streets," a meeting to discuss key legal concerns for harm reduction projects. The 25 participants, mostly representing IHRD's focus countries (Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Lithuania, Poland, Russia, Tajikistan, and Ukraine), identified priorities for legal work to reduce HIV infection and other drug-related harms and safeguard the rights of injection drug users. Asked to identify priorities for NPHP's new Law and Health program, participants recommended a three-pronged strategy: first, focus on direct legal services, including legal counseling and litigation assistance; second, integrate drug policy and harm reduction education into academic curricula; and third, increase support for impact litigation and public policy advocacy. A report on the meeting is forthcoming, and IHRD is identifying priorities for possible interventions. Contact: Monica Ciupagea, mciupagea@sorosny.org

Connecting Social Science Research to HIV/AIDS Policy in Africa

NPHP is in the process of organizing a seminar series to take place primarily in Africa, focused on key issues of social science and policy related to the AIDS pandemic. The seminars are intended to bridge a current disjuncture between epidemiological evidence, discourse, and policy by convening various communities to

make concrete recommendations that could then be put into action through a collaborative funding mechanism. Grassroots and civil society mobilization are a key component of all the seminars. Contact: Heather Doyle, hdoyle@sorosny.org

Advancing Legal Rights of Sex Workers

On July 22-24, SHARP funded and organized a Sex Work Policy Meeting in Vilnius, Lithuania, to discuss opportunities for advancing the rights of sex workers through legislation and policy and explore how NGOs can better inform sex workers of their legal rights and provide appropriate legal support. Participants included current grantees from a sex work and injecting drug user (IDU) policy initiative in Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, Lithuania, Ukraine, and Russia, along with regional experts working on a broad range of innovative programs, including cross-border advocacy networks, police training, and sex worker empowerment efforts. Contact: Sue Simon, ssimon@sorosny.org

Capacity Building:

Training Tobacco Control Advocates in Public Health

With funding from NPHP and the Framework Convention Alliance, the Health Promotion Foundation in Poland will host a two-week summer school course on tobacco and public health in August to build the number and capacity of advocates working in the field of tobacco control in the NIS focus countries of the Tobacco Control Policy program-Armenia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Moldova, and Ukraine. The summer school will provide intensive instruction in epidemiology, industry behavior, economics, advocacy, and policy options including the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control. Contact: Sai Jahann, sjahann@sorosny.org.

Chinese, Nigerian Journalists Receive Knight Public Health Journalism Fellowship

With support from NPHP, two journalists from Nigeria and China will participate in the Knight Public Health Journalism Fellowship run by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in Atlanta. Olayinka Oyegbile, assistant editor at *Daily Independent* in Lagos, Nigeria, writes the weekly column "Inside Africa." His public health reporting focuses on tobacco and cancer issues. Zongtao Li, senior reporter at the *Xinmin Weekly* in Shanghai, China, is one of a handful of Chinese reporters writing in-depth stories about HIV/AIDS. The fellows will undertake a three-month tour of CDC, which includes investigating live disease outbreaks, followed by two months of support for health reporting in the journalist's home country. Contact: Sai Jahann, sjahann@sorosny.org

Hands-on Journalism Training and Mentoring

In collaboration with the International Women's Media Foundation (IWMF), NPHP is supporting two fellowships for media editors and producers to obtain hands-on journalism training at U.S. media organizations. The recipients are Yan Hu, the health page editor of the *Shanghai Star* and a public health reporter at the *China Daily* in Shanghai, China, and Halima Balarbe, principal producer at the Federal Radio Corporation of Nigeria (Kaduna). Both will receive training for four months and receive two months' support for investigative reporting upon returning to their home countries. In addition to the hands-on journalism training provided, the IWMF fellowships foster the editor-journalist mentoring relationship that is often lacking in developing country news organizations. Contact: Sai Jahann, sjahann@sorosny.org

Publications, Awards, and Other News:

George Soros and Network Public Health Program Awarded Stampar Medal

The Association of Schools of Public Health in the European Region (ASPHER) awarded the Andrija Stampar Medal to George Soros for his leadership and commitment to advancing public health in the CEE/fSU region. Mr. Soros received the award on behalf of the Network Public Health Program in recognition of its achievements to introduce and develop public health professionalism in CEE/fSU countries. Michael Borowitz, director of NPHP, will accept the award this fall at the ASPHER annual conference in Yerevan, Armenia. OSI will fund 50 deans of schools of public health from Central Eurasia, Africa, and the Middle East to attend the conference and will contribute to two workshops involving the interface between public health training and policy. Contact: Noah Simmons, nsimmons@sorosny.org

Profile of a Partnership in Public Health Capacity Building

“Public Health Capacity Building in Southeastern Europe: A Partnership between OSI and CDC,” appeared in the July/August 2005 issue of the *Journal of Public Health Management*. The article profiles efforts by OSI and the CDC to improve public health planning and management needs in Croatia, Macedonia, and more recently, Serbia. NPHP Program Officer, Noah Simmons, was among the authors of the article. The article is attached; hard copies are available upon request. Contact: Noah Simmons, nsimmons@sorosny.org

Welcome to New Roma Health Program Coordinator

As the scope and budget of the Roma Health program has increased in 2005 and will likely continue to grow in the following year, NPHP has hired Cristi Mihalache to be the full-time Roma Health Program Coordinator. Cristi will start with OSI in August 2005 and will be based in Budapest. Contact: cmihalache@osi.hu

Upcoming Events:

In collaboration with the World Health Organization’s Cancer Control Program, the **International Palliative Care Initiative** is organizing an OSI Seminar on Palliative Care in Cancer in Budapest on September 4-7, 2005. International and regional cancer and palliative care organizations from 11 countries in the CEE/fSU region will meet with national leaders representing cancer, pain, and palliative care to discuss the challenges of incorporating palliative care in cancer. Contact: Mary Callaway, mcallaway@sorosny.org

A **Global Fund** planning meeting between the NPHP and OSI’s Brussels, London, and Washington D.C. offices well as senior management and external stake-holders will be held in London from September 7-9. The meeting aims to coordinate OSI’s Global Fund activities, determine future engagement, and establish criteria for grantmaking related to the Global Fund and support for its civil society strategy. Contact: Noah Simmons, nsimmons@sorosny.org

In September 2005, the **Health Media program** hopes to host the Chinese fellows and the Nigerian fellows at the OSI offices in New York. Their visit would include open panel discussions on HIV/AIDS and the media in their respective countries. Contact: Sai Jahann, sjahann@sorosny.org.

Public Health Watch is organizing a panel symposium on its TB Monitoring Project at the 36th Union World Conference on Lung Health of the International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease (IUATLD) in Paris in mid-October. The symposium will feature presentations from four of the project’s five country researchers, detailing their preliminary findings and recommendations regarding government TB policies in Brazil, Nigeria, Tanzania, and Thailand. Contact: Emily Bell, ebell@sorosny.org

A second IUATLD symposium is being organized by the **TB/HIV Small Grants Project**. The project is supporting a variety of community-led advocacy efforts for better and more integrated TB and HIV/AIDS services and policies. This symposium will spotlight the efforts of 5 of its 31 grantees. Contact: Eleonora Jimenez, ejimenez@sorosny.org

The **Drug Replacement Therapy Seminar** of the Open Medical Institute–Salzburg Medical Seminars International will take place from August 14-20. The course will be led by Dr. Robert Newman, president emeritus of Continuum Health Partners. Contact: Janna Ataiants, jataiants@sorosny.org. The next public health-focused Salzburg seminar, **Public Health Education**, led by Dr. Charles Norman of Trinity College, will take place from September 4-10. Contact: Noah Simmons, nsimmons@sorosny.org. For more information on the OMI–Salzburg Seminars, please see: <http://www.aaf-online.org/smsi05.htm>.