Our mission

MiraMed Institute is a nonprofit, tax exempt public charity with Special Consultative status in the United Nations Economic and Social Council. Our mission is to provide programs of social protection, education and training for displaced and orphaned children in Russia and coalition-building and human rights advocacy for the prevention of sexual trafficking of girls and young women from Russia and the CIS.

Our programs

Counter-trafficking

Education, prevention, capacity-building and legal advocacy in partnership with the Angel Coalition and its 60 member NGO network throughout Russia and the CIS.

Coordination of victim rescue, return and rehabilitation through a Moscow-based Trafficking Victims Assistance Center and network of 9 safehouses in Russia.

Independent Living and Social Adaptation for Orphans

MiraMed’s Moscow Center and partner Centers in five other cities help more than 1200 orphans receive life skills education through a two year curriculum-based transitional education program.

A National Training Center teaches orphanage staff, psychologists and social workers how to present this program at orphanages in other cities and regions.

Educational and social services support programs for emancipated orphans ages 18-23.

Young Single Mothers

Preparing single women 15-23 years old, who are pregnant or have children under 3, for successful motherhood with a comprehensive program of education, medical, social and vocational services.

HIV/AIDS Prevention


Social Education

Teaching tolerance to senior high school students using live in-school professional theatre as a catalyst for attitudinal change to reduce xenophobia, racism and prejudice against orphans, the disabled, people with HIV/AIDS and national minorities.

Creating an Advocacy Network of NGO’s supporting marginalized groups to help educate local/regional government.
December 1, 2005

Letter from Dr. Juliette M. Engel, Founding Director

Dear Colleagues, Sponsors and Friends!

2005 has been a year of growth for MiraMed Institute in Russia in spite of an uncertain and constantly changing environment. We remain focused on building the capacity and sustainability of our Russian partners – The Angel Coalition, Women and Children First and Theater for a Change – while our programs gain increasing support from both the Russian government and the corporate community.

If Russia is to survive into the next century as a stable society and anchor for maintaining peace in the boundary regions of Asia and the Middle East, Russian children must be protected – not only from the external dangers but from the threats from within. The fastest growing rate of death in Russia is among youth 15 to 30 years of age – which reflects the widening HIV/AIDS epidemic and the rise in youth drug abuse and alcoholism.

President Vladimir Putin has declared that 2006 will be the year of “Protection of the Child”. Most of the factors threatening young people here are being addressed by our programs, which has drawn the attention of the President’s Administration, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, and the governments of Moscow, Nizhni Novgorod, Kazan, and Saratov. These key programs include educating the most at-risk populations about the growing incidence of HIV/AIDS, working to protect the increasing numbers of young Russian women and girls who are criminally trafficked abroad for prostitution, improving the health of young single mothers and their babies (which now account for more than a third of all new births in Russia), and teaching critical life skills to teenage orphans so when they leave their institutions they will not become addicts, criminals or trafficking victims. In 2006, some of our programs will be officially incorporated into the Russian social welfare system and funded completely by the Russian government. This includes our Young Single Mothers program, which continues to expand, that the City of Moscow will replicate in community centers throughout the Moscow region.

• This spring, our Center for Independent Living and Social Adaptation for orphans began publication of “We Can Do It!”, Moscow’s first monthly full-color, full-sized newspaper specifically for orphans, about orphans and, as much as possible, by orphans. Support for this project is provided by United Way/Moscow.

• Thanks to funding support from the Bristol-Myers Squibb Health Foundation, the World Childhood Foundation and Geneva Global, MiraMed’s Center in partnership with Women and Children First has also begun development of Russia’s first comprehensive teaching curriculum for HIV/AIDS prevention among the highest risk youth – orphans, street children and social orphans. The first draft of this curriculum has been completed and is currently being tested in six Moscow schools.

• In October, a new partnership with UNICEF led to a proposal to convert a full-sized bus, donated by Amnesty International, into a mobile classroom to bring HIV/AIDS education to all orphanages and shelters in Moscow. We look forward to seeing this exciting, innovative project become a reality in 2006.

• With support from the US State Department, the Swedish International Development Agency and Geneva Global, the Angel Coalition Trafficking Victim Assistance Center (TVAC) in Moscow was able to conduct high level government trainings on the counter-trafficking issue throughout Russia, with the result that the Angel Coalition now works at the highest levels with the Ministry of Interior, Federal Police, and Foreign Ministry Consular Division conducting rescues and repatriations, and helping Russian organizations to build rehabilitation and shelter services for trafficking victims.

• Our next major anti-trafficking project addresses the need to provide assistance to the tens of thousands of children trafficked into Moscow from rural regions of Russia or former Soviet republics for purposes of prostitution, sex tourism, and pornography. Our partner will be the City of Moscow and our goal will be to develop a system of shelters for the rescue and rehabilitation of these child victims. The project is funded by World Childhood Foundation and the US State Department.

• Theater for a Change completed its first successful first year reaching almost 10,000 students performing more than 200 tolerance education plays throughout the Volga Federal Region. The USAID-funded program continues to 2007.

Once again I thank all of our sponsors, donors and friends who continue to keep our work and the dreams of thousands of Russian children alive with your love and generous contributions. You are all making a difference in the world – one child at a time!

Juliette M. Engel, MD
Moscow, December 1, 2005
City of Moscow pledges full financial support to Young Single Mother’s Program in 2006

The Young Single Mother’s Program continues to be a unique and popular program in Moscow for single young mothers and their babies — a program that has brought hope and real change to hundreds of young mothers and their infants, while bringing purpose to the lives of Russian seniors. The creative approaches that we have developed and implemented represent a combination of the most proven techniques from Russian, Swedish, and American psychologists and pedagogues, with our own innovation added.

A unique and positive feature of the program is approval by the Russian Orthodox Church and the participation of the regional branch of the Church in baptizing the mothers and their babies and teaching classes in spiritual life.

This program has also achieved an impressive level of support from business, with material contributions from Oriflame, Nestle, Faberlique, IKEA, Bristol-Myers Squibb, and others. The success of the program is so well recognized that administrations of many okrugs of Moscow and the city government itself are now willing to become full, active financial partners in the first quarter of 2006.

The program currently supports 200 teen mothers, 207 babies and 25 teenaged fathers with classes in parenthood, psychological and social counseling, participation in community activities including painting, dancing, gym class, field trips. Most importantly, we have built a “Russian village” of support that includes Russian seniors, the church, the staffs of community centers, and community volunteers to provide a sense of belonging and family that none of our moms and babies or most of our seniors would otherwise ever know. Although these people face terrible difficulties every day, the program is a celebration of life and community.

MiraMed Centers for Independent Living and Social Adaptation celebrates 1200th student, begins pilot HIV/AIDS prevention education program in Moscow schools

From humble beginnings in two rooms at a social services center in the outskirts of Moscow serving a handful of orphans, the MiraMed Center for Independent Living and Social Adaptation has grown to a network of centers in five cities serving more than 1200 students in 2005! Our partners in St. Petersburg, Ryazan, Skopein, Uglich, and St. Petersburg celebrated their sixth anniversary this year and now collectively work with fifty orphanages providing critically needed life skills education to orphans before they re-enter society at age 17.

Director Jenny Chambers and her staff of professional psychologists and social workers are also completing their second year of operating a National Training Center to share their experience with orphanages all over Russia. As a direct result of the Center’s growing reputation for curriculum-based life skills training for at-risk youth, MiraMed and Women and Children First (the Russian Charity founded in 2002 by MiraMed Institute) are working now in partnership with the Russian Ministry of Education to develop an integrated HIV/AIDS prevention education curriculum. The project, which will take two or three years, began this summer with a comprehensive review of existing HIV/AIDS educational material to determine what can be used or needs to be developed to create successful methods and materials.

In 2006, the first elements of the curriculum will be piloted in Moscow public schools. Based on an evaluation of this pilot, the project will be rolled out to additional schools with the overall concept a potential model for all of Russia. The program is an enormous challenge as well as a major vote of confidence in MiraMed’s ability to design and develop complex programs that really work.

Other milestones this year include publication of Russia’s first newspaper for orphans, “Mi Sami!”, an 8-page full color monthly that is now distributed to all seventy orphanages and internats in Moscow. Funded by United Way/Russia, this project not only gives orphans the chance to participate in the newspaper by submitting articles, music reviews, commentary, artwork, humor, and more, but read about themselves and other orphans as well as get information that would otherwise be hard to find. “Mi Sami!” allows the Center to reach thousands of orphans not currently served by our programs with critical information about health, legal rights, social responsibility, and other life skills issues.

Orphanage girls are the most vulnerable at-risk population in Russia today. Our mission is to do all we can to help teach them to feel good about themselves and their decision-making.

Several of our Centers have kitchens where students can learn to cook a meal which is then served to everyone. In Moscow one of our guest teachers was a terrific Indian chef and needless to say his classes were packed!
For the past two years, MiraMed Institute has received funding from the Trafficking in Persons Office of the US State Department through IOM Moscow for a four-year anti-trafficking initiative, The Russian Project. The result of our first two years of work has been the creation of the only organizational network in Russia that initiates and coordinates the rescue, repatriation, and rehabilitation of trafficking victims. This complex, integrated, and fully functional system now includes:
1) a network of nine shelters for trafficking victims,
2) a 24-hour national/international help line which directly activates emergency rescues and victim assistance by the Trafficking Victim Assistance Center (TVAC) in Moscow, and
3) a unique working relationship between TVAC staff and senior Russian governmental officials that ensures high levels of government cooperation in counter-trafficking actions and participation in MiraMed/Angel Coalition training conferences.

Since starting operations in June 2003, the TVAC has provided direct assistance in repatriation and finding of missing persons to more than 800 people from the Russian Federation, Germany, Belgium, USA, Ukraine, Netherlands, Italy, Spain, UAE, Turkey, Israel, Uzbekistan, and Great Britain. It has also been directly responsible for the successful rescue and repatriation of 52 CIS nationals, including eleven survivors who were rescued by TVAC staff directly at Sheremetyevo Airport following deportation from Israel and Europe.

The TVAC is the main coordinating center for the Angel Coalition network of 60 NGOs throughout the CIS – nine of whom operate safe houses for victims of trafficking. MiraMed and TVAC staff provide ongoing financial oversight and capacity building to all of these regional safe house partners.

The TVAC also functions as a key provider and conduit of regional information, advocacy, and lobbying by regional NGOs to the federal government. TVAC and MiraMed staff have written the “Counter-trafficking Protocol and Plan of Action for the Russian Federation” and the “Trafficking Victim Assistance” protocol, which serve as the bases of NGO/governmental interactions federally and regionally, and set standards for victim assistance and the operation of safe houses in Russia.

Today, TVAC works as a full partner with IOM, OSCE, Europol; police in the countries of Russia, the USA, Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, Spain, Italy, Turkey, Israel, Sweden, Norway, and Finland; and with international NGOs including Salvation Army, Winrock, Save the Children, World Childhood Foundation, Terre des Hommes, Doctors Without Borders, Women to Women, Soroptimist International, CATW, European Women’s Lobby, and many others.

Increasing role of MiraMed Institute and the Angel Coalition in the United Nations

MiraMed Institute has been extremely fortunate to have Lois A. Herman as our United Nations Representative for MiraMed. Her multidimensional participation in major UN events and programs throughout the year has resulted in increased visibility and respect for MiraMed and its programs throughout the international community. Lois Herman is also Coordinator of the Women’s UN Report Network – WUNRN, the most active Gender ListServe in the world which intersects the United Nations system multiple times daily and at levels as high as the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.


In July, she participated in the Network for European Women’s Rights (NEWR) Conference in the United Kingdom which had a thematic focus on trafficking. She is in regular communication and consultation with the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Trafficking and the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women and has had personal meetings these rapporteurs in Geneva and the UK. In October, 2005, Ms. Herman was invited and joined MiraMed Institute’s Board of Directors.

As part of MiraMed’s ongoing support to the Angel Coalition, high level regional trainings are held all over Russia that bring together Russian and European trafficking experts, police, lawyers, gender specialists, psychologists, government and civic officials. These multi-day events are considered major news stories by regional media and receive wide exposure. Here, MiraMed founder Dr. Juliette Engel is shown with Carolina Wennerholm, of Kvinnoforum, one of our NGO partners in Sweden.
One of the new publications from the Angel Coalition is this 32-page “Resource Guide” in English and Russian that contains hundreds of listings of NGO’s, government and law enforcement agencies that are working against trafficking in Russia, CIS countries and Baltic states.

The important reference work was created as part of the Angel Coalition project with Kvinnoforum, its Swedish NGO partner in this Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) funded project.

A recent issue of Mi Sami (“We can do it!), Russia’s first newspaper for orphans, printed each month and delivered to all Moscow internats and orphanages! Printed on newsprint in full color, the publication is jointly created by Moscow Center staff and orphans.

Each year dozens of orphanage students who take part of our Center programs submit artwork that we use to create corporate holiday cards. All of the selected designs are put up on our website in the late Fall and then we contact as many companies as we can so their management staff can choose the one they want and with their purchase, help support MiraMed and its programs. The list of companies who buy these cards is impressive and growing—from American firms with offices here like AIG, Boeing, Bristol, Myers, Squibb, GE and Proctor and Gamble to major Russian and European companies such as SeverStal, CTC-TV, Oriflame, Aton Capital and others.
Also new this year is the first brochure for Theatre for a Change, in Russia and English. As part of the self-sufficiency plan for the Theatre, this brochure and their new website will be used to help promote their programs for youth to new funding sources.

Women and Children First produces dozens of publications each year—from “tetradi” (workbooks) for the 1200 students involved in their Center programs to special manuals for teachers as well as focused publications on HIV/AIDS prevention (the middle and far right booklets at the top and the middle, above) and even an HIV/AIDS prevention “game” (the inverted horseshoe poster above). All of the photos, design and artwork on these pages is created “in house” by orphans and our staff, under the direction of our staff designer Dima Shinkarev.
MiraMed initiates shelter program for child victims of sexual trafficking in Moscow

Although sexual exploitation of minors occurs in all regions Russia, it manifests most acutely in Moscow. As the nation’s largest and most influential city – the gateway to Europe – it serves as a magnet not only for homeless children looking for work but for pimps and traffickers who import women and children into Moscow from economically depressed regions and former Soviet republics for prostitution and sexual slavery.

According to the Moscow militia more than 70,000 victims of trafficking for prostitution are currently in Moscow. Ninety percent of them are women and girls and 80% of them are under 18 years of age. Exacerbating their fate is the fact that there is currently no system of rescue or rehabilitation for these girls – only deportation if they are caught by police.

Unfortunately, all rescue, protection, and assistance attempts are critically impaired by the absence of any shelters equipped to receive or assist child victims of sexual exploitation in Moscow. As a result, children whose first point of contact is with police or social services are randomly distributed to hospitals or to the closest city run shelters. There are about 100 of these in Moscow which process approximately 50,000 “vagrant” children each year.

No distinction is made between child victims of violence, runaways, children who have committed criminal acts, violent children, etc. All are simply placed into a holding facility until a final dispensation can be made by referring them on through the court system, into an orphanage, deporting them, or until they simply leave the shelter on their own. Many child victims of sexual violence and exploitation are simply re-exploited and/or subjected to more violence in the shelters. The majority of shelter staff interviewed during the course of this research consider their shelters nothing more than detention facilities for “difficult” youth.

MiraMed Institute has, however, identified thirteen shelters where staff not only wants to help but clearly understand the urgent need for improving their ability to respond to children in this situation. Although supportive of our proposal, the staff of these centers feels that their training and experience are currently completely inadequate for providing appropriate care to these children. They agreed, however, that with intensive staff training and on-site support from experts, their shelters could become the sanctuary and rehabilitation centers these children need and deserve.

With funding support from the World Childhood Foundation, and in partnership with the Angel Coalition and Women and Children First, MiraMed Institute has begun a three year project to provide
1) training for shelter staff, police, social workers, medical personnel, and other points of contact for the children, as well as
2) direct consultation services to child trafficking victims in the shelters, and
3) assistance with repatriation in partnership with other international NGOs and the International Organization of Migration.

Theater for a Change premières “It’s Your Choice” focusing on HIV/AIDS and ethnic minorities

Year two of MiraMed’s USAID “Value of Tolerance” grant began with the premiere of “It’s Your Choice,” an original play about intolerance towards national minorities and people with HIV/AIDS. The performance will be viewed by 10,000 students this year in three major cities in the Volga Federal District. In addition to the performance, MiraMed and the theater are working with the school administration in Nizhni Novgorod (Russia’s third largest city) to develop a tolerance curriculum for use in public schools. A new Director of Education, Anastassia Shendyapina, has been hired to lead this effort.

MiraMed is also developing an Advocacy Coalition of NGOs in the Volga Federal District who are working collectively to help educate people about the tolerance issues facing their constituents. On November 16, NGO members of the Coalition sponsored “International Tolerance Day” (inaugurated by UNESCO ten years ago) at schools in Saratov and Nizhni Novgorod – the first celebrations of this global event in these cities.

To learn more about this exciting, innovative project, please visit the theater’s new website, in English and Russian, www.teatreperemen.org, donated by MiraMed volunteer web designer Carla Perez-Colon.

Valera and Sveta in “The Enemy Within” greet the audience with a dance. The characters are life size puppets worn by actors. Sveta is an orphan with a big chip on her shoulder and Valera, her boyfriend, finds out later in the play that he has HIV.
MiraMed Institute and Angel Coalition conduct high level federal trainings in Petrozavodsk, St. Petersburg, Murmansk, Kazan, and Yaroslavl

This year, MiraMed Institute and the Angel Coalition – together with Sweden’s Kvinnoforum and local NGOs in five cities – organized high-level regional anti-trafficking conferences in Petrozavodsk, St. Petersburg, Kazan, Murmansk, and Yaroslavl. One of MiraMed Institute’s five original partners for its Russian Safe House Project served as the host organization for each conference, all of which were funded by the Office to Combat and Monitor Trafficking in Persons (TIP) of the US Department of State and the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA).

Conference organizers worked intensively to achieve the following objectives:

1) to bring foreign and Russian experts together to conduct training and facilitate international and domestic partnerships on anti-trafficking issues;
2) to build federal, regional, and local support for the Safe House Project; and
3) to review counter-trafficking methods used regionally and nationally in order to revise the Counter-trafficking Protocol for the Russian Federation.

Collectively, the conferences brought together over four hundred participants, including foreign experts from ten countries. Among the attendees were representatives of media organizations, government agencies, foreign embassies and consulates, intergovernmental organizations, educational institutions, and NGOs, in addition to social workers, psychologists, lawyers, and law enforcement. In addition to Russian (366 registered attendees) and Swedish (25) representatives, nationals of Finland (4), Turkey (3), the USA (6), Norway (2), as well as Italy, France, Germany, Denmark, the Netherlands (1 each) participated in the conferences. There were five representatives of intergovernmental organizations whose nationalities were unspecified. Fifteen participants were affiliated with a foreign embassy or consulate.

A sixth and final conference was held in Moscow in May which brought together all of the Angel Coalition member organizations currently operating or planning to open shelters for a protocol writing conference which built upon the successes of the high-level training conferences. Both the Counter-trafficking Protocol and Plan of Action for the Russian Federation, published in August of 2004, and the Trafficking Victim Assistance Protocol, published in June 2003, were revised to incorporate findings from the regional conferences and the hands-on experience of each member organization.

UNICEF and MiraMed team up to create the rock and rolling “We Can Do It Express!”

In October, MiraMed and the Moscow office of UNICEF jointly began development of Moscow’s first mobile HIV/AIDS educational learning lab – the “Mi Sami Express!” (“We Can Do It Express!”). The project proposes to use a Mercedes Benz bus, donated by Amnesty International, to educate orphans, street children and other at-risk teens about HIV/AIDS. If the project is approved, the bus will be completely renovated and equipped with the latest multimedia technology. Each week it will be driven to Moscow orphanages, internats and shelters where MiraMed’s professional teachers and psychologists will bring groups of children on board to participate in a “rock and rolling interactive educational experience”!

Best wishes to Program Director Robert Aronson!

In November, Robert Aronson, MiraMed’s program director for the past 9 years, left the organization. His future plans are to remain in Russia to help train his replacement at MiraMed, as well as consult with other Russian NGO’s and take time off to write a long-delayed children’s book. As many of our donors and funders know, Robert’s contributions to MiraMed have been extraordinary. His unique background in nonprofit marketing, management and finance as creative director and president of one of the first advertising agencies in the US to specialize in nonprofit work (still going strong after more than 30 years!) brought a new level of expertise to MiraMed than has enabled us to become such a respected international NGO.

Robert’s ability to conceptualize, direct and execute complex programs helped create MiraMed’s National Training Center to teach orphanage social adaptation and life skills to orphanage staff, psychologists and social workers; numerous anti-trafficking media and education campaigns for MiraMed and the Angel Coalition; the Summer Volunteer Program and most recently, the MiraMed/Theatre for a Change Tolerance project. His enormous energy, sense of humor and willingness to do grunt work as well as executive-level tasks will be sorely missed. Best wishes and success in the future, Robert!
Major grants, donors and sponsors – 2005

Major grants and donors
United States Department of State
Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons
United States International Development Agency
IOM – International Organization of Migration
The Starr Foundation
World Childhood Foundation
Geneva Global
The GE Foundation
The Gerard Health Foundation
The Anne and Charles Roos Advised Trust
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