Spiritual State of the World's Children

Russia

OneHope

GOD'S WORD. EVERY CHILD.

Spiritual State of the World's Children
A Qualitative Study

Russia

November 2007

Prepared by:

metadigm
RIGHT INFORMATION - RIGHT ACTION GROUP

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ONEHOPE

OneHope is a non-profit organization with a mission to *affect destiny by providing God's eternal Word to all the children and youth of the world.* With programs in over 125 nations OneHope has reached over 500 million children and young people with a special presentation of the life of Jesus. Committed to presenting God's Word in a format that is relevant and dynamic, research is a critical step in the development of country and age specific products and programs.

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Section I: Project Overview

Convened Groups

The following groups have been used in discovery research; however, as each region is unique these categories were reexamined in the Russian context and groups convened to maximize the information gathered.

- Government Leadership
- NGO & Missionary
- Denominational Leadership
- Pastors
- Youth Workers
- School Administrators & Teachers
- Students

Regions for Focus Groups

- Moscow (scheduled)
- Krasnoyarsk
- Izhevsk
- Perm
- Chita

Leadership and Facilitators

The project was led and co-facilitated by Ilia Kolmagorov and Irina Litvinova (OneHope).

Focus Group Composition

Each focus group will be comprised of a single demographic and limited to no more than eight participants of similar social parity. Some of the demographic groups will be represented by several groups meeting separately. The findings of each group represent a single demographic and have been consolidated into a single report for that group. Information included in the final report will not contain identifiers that might determine that name, identity or opinion of any group member.

Format

The focus group sessions were 90 minutes or less in length. The facilitators encouraged group members to describe their "lived" experience as they informally assess the needs and activities from their perspectives. Common themes were evaluated for inclusion in the final report.

Schedule for Data Collection

- The topics for focus groups were finalized September 2007 by Ilia Kolmagorov, Irina Litvinova, Chad Causey, and Dr. Allen Reesor.
- Focus groups were conducted by Ilia Kolmagorov with assistance by Antonina Biryukova (Chita), Elena Kuznetsova (Izhevsk), and Irina Litvinova.

Data Analysis and Reporting

The comments and findings of each focus group were transcribed by a secretary. The general discussion, main points, conclusions and recommendations were written and read to the group for their approval at the end of the session. This information was compiled by Ilia Kolmagorov. It was evaluated in a draft report completed for review by Ilia Kolmagorov, Allen Reesor, and Mindy Chandler.

This report answers the questions and issues identified as essential for decision-making, distribution planning and outcome design. It identifies common and/or recurring themes and compares these to other secondary research data.

The report will be reviewed by leadership in Russia and made available to designated focus group leaders for review prior to publication. The final report will be the sole property of OneHope Russia, and may only be reproduced with permission from its authorized agents.

Focus Group Research Questions and Themes

Pastors/Youth Workers

- What are the programs for youth and how effective are they?
- Do youth programs in churches work inter-denominationally?
- Are there any international programs used?
- Are churches more effectively involved in discipleship or evangelism of the youth?
- Youth activity and involvement in churches
- Needs of the youth inside and outside the church
- Challenges/pressures faced by the youth of Russia

School Administrators & Teachers

- Struggles teachers face with behavior and challenges with students
- Ways to help the students in their problems
- Teaching style & involvement in the students' lives beyond the classroom
- The pressures that affect students' performance and education
- How are the teachers treated culturally?
- What influences the students' values and behaviors most
- How supportive are families of the teachers' efforts?

Students

- What do you like to do outside of school?
- What pressures occur in relationships, clothing, housing and typical day?
- What would you do to help other students get rid of bad habits?
- What is your view of church/religion?
- What is a good teacher like?
- What would you like to say to adults if you had a chance?
- What are the values of the youth today and the role models, if any?
- What would you like to do after you finish school?
- What engages/interests you most (music, drama, verbal, video, personal interaction)?

NGO/Missionaries

- What roles and functions do NGO's play in today's Russia?
- The attitude in Russia to NGO's and Missionary organizations
- How willingly do people donate to NGO's and Missionaries and what is the minimum amount necessary for a Missionary's subsistence?
- The characteristics of today's Russian youth
- What channels/media should be employed to convey information to the Russian youth?
- What issues, problems and challenges do the Russian youth face?

Government representatives

- What are the issues/problems/challenges Russian youth face today?
- What is being done in regard to youth issues/problems/challenges?

- What are the characteristics of Russian youth that you observe?

Section II: Executive Summary

General Information

The following numbers are drawn from the Russian Census Information materials, while historical information was obtained from *Information Please* .

Population:
143,100,000
% of population rural – 27%
% of population urban – 73%

Population % by Age:
0-16 years: 22%
17-59 years: 56%
60 years and over: 22%

Population Ratio males to females
0.98 : 1.0

Gross Domestic Product per capita
5305.34 USD

% Employment by sector
Industry: 52%, Agriculture: 20%, Service Sector: 13%, Natural Resource Development: 15%

% Adult Literacy
98%

Religions: Russian Orthodox 42% Christian 10%

Languages: Russian (official), autonomous regions have Russian plus national languages

Focus Groups and Meetings

Between September 20 and November 25, 2007 focus groups and meetings were scheduled and organized by OneHope Russia. A research team of four members assisted in conducting group sessions and gathering and collating data throughout Russia.

Focus groups and interviews included ministry leaders, representatives of NGO's / Missionaries involved in youth services, pastors, youth workers, teachers and students between the ages of 10 and 18. Additionally, interviews with NGO/Missionaries and government officials were conducted.

Key Issues

Strengths & Opportunities
- Consensus among the groups on the problems
- The awareness of the need to strengthen families
- Students are looking for answers that are relevant to their reality and needs; students are open to education and role model influences
- Participants perceive the need to develop a foundation for consistent moral decision making
- Youth as high consumers of media offer the potential to influence awareness through this avenue, particularly through television, music, and personal electronic communication
- The lack of structured free time, activities, and affiliations offer an opportunity to reach and influence youth

- There is a consensus that the dangers of alcohol and drugs should be addressed

Weaknesses & Threats

- Youth do not recognize the problems of poor self-esteem, uncertainty in expressing relationships, and clear personal identity
- Youth are marginalized and lack identity within the broader social structures; exhibited as loneliness, isolation, lack of trust, expressions of disrespect, violence, anxiety about their future, and stress
- Disintegration of family structure; lacking positive family function and influence in the lives of youth
- Negative moral values and attitudes are generally communicated by peers and media more than positive values and attitudes
- Youth lack a positive expression of sexuality, and have a low awareness of the dangers of STDs, HIV/AIDS, and abortion
- High engagement throughout society with alcohol consumption
- High expectations for quality of media products and low affiliation with print media reduces its potential for influence

Responses to Research Questions/Areas

1. **Felt needs common to children and youth in Russia**
   Youth face issues of poor self-esteem, uncertainty in expressing relationships, and unclear personal identity. They are often marginalized and lack identify within the broader social structures. This may be exhibited as expressions of loneliness, isolation, lack of trust, disrespect, violence, anxiety about their future, and stress.

2. **Felt needs specific to and/or differing by region, gender or population density**
   Felt needs tend to be addressed less effectively in rural environments. Otherwise there are no significant differences by region or gender.

3. **Barriers to engaging children and youth (nationally and by region)**
   There is a lack of coordination within the evangelical community. This is further exacerbated by the restrictions placed on religious teaching within school systems and publicly endorsed programs and institutions.

4. **Best practices of media appeal to children and youth in Russia**
   Media appeal of print products is decreasing. It will be necessary to develop broadcast and electronic communication media, such as instant messaging, computer and internet media.

5. **Interests of children and youth by region, gender and population density (events, activities, places) changes and trends**
   The most effective media distributions other than Book of Hope identified by pastors include AWANA, Alfa Course (video), concerts and camps.

6. **Emerging behaviors of youth and their impact on the nation**
   Emerging issues identified include finding a positive expression of sexuality and better awareness of the dangers of alcohol consumption, STDs, HIV/AIDS, and abortion. The youth are reported as open to new perspectives. It was identified that there is less prejudice against spiritual reality. This also poses the risk that New Age spirituality will be embraced. There is skepticism expressed toward Western (and American) values at the same time as increase in materialism.

7. **Evaluate changing social dynamics in Russia**
   Traditional families have been eroded. Youth have freedom to access greater information than previously possible. However, they lack the ability to evaluate and filter the influences they encounter. They experience a social fragmentation prompted by evident economic and class polarization.

8. **Capacity to fund and develop new projects; what merits resource investment**
   Messages must be conveyed through media that appeals to youth. If possible, products that benefit from the fascination with the electronic media should be offered. There is limited internal capacity within the Russian evangelical community to fund these initiatives.

   There is a need for permanent full-time youth workers who can engage in personal evangelism and discipleship but many of those currently engaged doubt whether they can financially afford to remain in this ministry.

9. **Message of Christian faith (OT/NT biblical accounts) to be communicated to children and youth**
   No clear single message emerged from the research focus groups. It is recommended that this issue be taken up by a strategic planning effort that incorporates a broad spectrum of Christian perspectives.

   Special interests that will open access to the lives of non-Christian children and youth (events, activities, places)

   The most effective youth events at this point are camps and sports activities that promote opportunities for children and youth to engage with youth leadership. Youth leadership must be willing to mentor on a personal basis. Characteristics identified by youth as preferred in those they look to for leadership include fairness, understanding, ability to feel the audience and to adjust the

style and presentation to their needs, as well as being able to trust the teacher, share some secrets with him/her and obtain good advice; many students want more men as teachers.

10. **Levels of collaboration and willingness to collaborate among ministries and effective programs/events**
This is a serious issue. See Key Issues & Recommendations comment in the Executive Summary above.

11. **Possibility of targeting specific sub populations of youth e.g. those with leadership potential**
It was suggested by teachers in the school system that older youth be equipped to mentor and encourage younger children and youth. Natural student leaders should be encouraged and trained to be involved in transferring positive values among their peers.

12. **Current state of ministry to children and youth by region, gender and population density**
In most regions, ministry to children is more established and successful than ministry to teenagers and youth. It was pointed out that many churches are losing influence on teenagers and youth and see this as an area where urgent effort is needed. This is even more exacerbated in the rural areas due to lack of resources and personnel.

13. **Skill level of youth workers and assessed need for training programs**
The focus group participants highlighted the importance of youth leaders' recognizing their calling and having a strong internal motivation to work with the youth. It was also noted that it's difficult to continue in youth ministry once married due to family obligations and financial considerations. It has also been raised as a consideration that many youth workers are poorly prepared to understand the development process and the various methods of communication necessary to minister to the entire range of children and youth.

14. **Potential for children and youth reaching peers**
There is some indication of interest in this area but few if any programs to effectively prepare for peer ministry. Some programs encourage children or youth from the church to participate in outreach, but usually without empowerment for undertaking personal initiative.

15. **Priority set on evangelism and discipleship of children and youth in churches**
The focus groups indicated that there is an equal commitment to each aspect of ministry. Some expressed doubts as to the effectiveness of existing evangelism and outreach programs. It is important to equip the church with effective means of outreach and discipleship so that initiative and motivation will not dissipate. Although larger churches are able to do more, there is no significant difference by region or population density.

16. **Programs and materials needed by local churches to transform the lives of children**
There is a serious lack, particularly in the rural areas, of relevant and appealing material to reach children and youth. More important than the materials in impacting children lives is the lack of qualified personnel. It is important that materials to recruit and train youth workers be made available.

17. **Need for new print and electronic media materials to appeal to and reach children and youth**
There is a significant need for new materials, particularly electronic media, in all regions.

18. **Language of appeal, literacy, and vocabulary necessary**
The decreasing appeal of print media means that emphasis should be placed on development of relevant and interesting electronic and broadcast media.

19. **Optimal quality of material for pricing and appeal**
Print media is preferred when it is high-quality with glossy paper. Shorter articles and products that are not text-heavy nevermind much higher appeal than text-only products.

Section III: Synopsis of Data and Findings

Synopsis of Government Leaders Focus Group

What are the issues / problems / challenges Russian youth face today?
The participants pointed toward the issue of demographic crisis in Russia, characterized until the recent years by a decreased birth rate and a negative birth/death ratio, influenced by the high rate of alcoholism, domestic violence and aggravated by the difficult economic conditions for some Russians. There is a nation-wide program in support of the family and child birth now, but the past is still having a harmful effect on the Russian youth. There is a high rate of sexually explicit information in the mass media, and it needs to be limited technically and legally. Government is exerting efforts to battle the above issues, and some policies have been successful.

One of the key issues is the negative image of the family in society coupled with wrong values presented to the youth about their future, encouraging materialistic lifestyle and immoral goals. The problem of abortion is significant – some participants quoted 1.6 million abortions a year, with 20% abortions done by girls before 18.

Stimulation of sexuality in the media is an alarming tendency given the lack of good, well-rounded sexual education that would include not only information about the physical and physiological aspects but also the social and psychological components. Sexual promiscuity is rampant, and teenagers start engaging in sexual activity now earlier than before.

A factor contributing to the general unfavorable situation is the continuing drastic stratification into the rich and the poor in the context of society favoring material success, which causes the less advantaged to experience the feelings of frustration and often to act with aggression against groups perceived as limiting or competing with them for resources.

What is being done in regard to youth issues?
Participants mentioned drug and alcohol prevention programs; AIDS prevention programs, which avoid the traditional bias of condom distribution programs and follow the ABC formula: "Abstinence – Be faithful – Use a Condom;" and retrovirus medicals for HIV/AIDS patients (most of whom are young people).

The crisis of a family is difficult to overcome quickly, but there are programs on the local level that help promote good family values. There are various volunteer programs, individual talks, counseling conducted. Youth employment is the goal of programs existing on the local and regional levels and can help to alleviate the general situation with destructive behavior and values.

What are the characteristics of Russian youth that you observe?
The participants stated that the youth have become more pragmatic than before, which influences the way that youth issues get addressed and programs enacted. At the same time, there is a significant number of the youth with a strong civil position, and this number is growing. These are the youth that become volunteers in miscellaneous government-directed or NGO-initiated programs.

The negative characteristics would be the infatuation with Western materialistic values among the majority of the youth and their media-centered lifestyles, with television and music being the great factors of influence. There are many opportunities now – a lot more than 30-40 years ago; the challenge, however, is for the young person to find his/her own place in this plethora of choices. Generally, however, most of the participants had a positive outlook on the future of the Russian youth.

Synopsis of Denomination Leadership Interviews
Focus groups with pastors were held separately from those with the youth leaders. However, both strata were presented with identical questions and held similar opinions.

Programs employed by the church, their effectiveness and interdenominational/international cooperation

What youth programs do you use in your church/denomination/union and what are the most effective ones?

A whole array of programs and activities were named: summer camps, various clubs (music, dance), numerous forms of outreaches (street concerts, tent crusades, intentional one-on-one evangelism programs, charitable activities), retreats, playing soccer, basketball, volleyball and other sports as a youth group. Programs that are most effective emphasize personal relationships and involvement in activities that are fun and at the same time stimulating intra- and interpersonal growth (physically, emotionally, intellectually and/or spiritually). These programs normally include physical activities such as hiking, camping, rafting, etc. However, it was also mentioned that all programs for the youth must include the spiritual formation component; otherwise the youth will be left with mere entertainment.

What interdenominational/international programs do you use?

Several interdenominational/international projects were mentioned: ACET AIDS awareness and prevention program, Alfa course, OneHope, Billy Graham Association's media projects, AWANA (for children and teenagers), Christian Summer Camps programs, Students for Christ (European Chi-Alpha outreach), Intervarsity, My Generation.

Ministry to Youth

What do your devote most of your effort to – evangelism or discipleship?

Some churches emphasize evangelism over the discipleship, some (usually smaller churches) state that they are devoted to inner church growth (spiritual growth and discipling). However, most churches agree that both aspects should be developed, but evangelism efforts are not always successful. Rural churches report discouragement among the youth regarding evangelism, as no visible results have been produced (many may come to the outreach events but very few of them stay in the church). Another disadvantage of rural church ministry is lack of resources – specifically developed programs that would take their needs into consideration. Some pastors report that they emphasize evangelism more and do not spend significant time on discipleship, yet they teach the youth by personal example and through a personal relationship, which seems to be a more effective way of discipleship than formal programs.

How active are the youth in the church?

Pastors that spoke of greater emphasis on evangelism in their churches also reported greater involvement of the youth in evangelism as well as internal programs of the church, quoting a 70-80% involvement. However, some pastors represented at the focus groups stated that only 30% of youth are active, with another 30% drawn into involvement by the most active group. The majority stated that only 20% (sometimes 10% or less) are active.

Needs and issues faced by the youth

What are the needs of the youth (in the church and outside the church)?

The greatest needs pointed out by the focus group participants are the necessity to be loved and accepted, parental care and discipline, a need to belong to a group and be able to see that you matter. The participants also mentioned the necessity for the youth to find a way out for their energy (physical and creative) and role models that they would be able to follow. Pastors report that most of these needs are not met by the parents and other adults, and they are also not met by the organized structures (such as the school system). This leads to the children and youth finding role models in the criminal world or in the world of show business, which at best further alienates the youth from the adults and at worst leads to destructive behavior.

What are the challenges/pressures faced by the youth of Russia

Several of the challenges and pressures faced by the Russian youth include: alienation from the parents, who are absent physically or psychologically; excessive and negative influence of media on the values and behavior of the youth; sexual promiscuity; pressure to conform to the immoral or destructive behavior exercised by the peers and the world around them; addiction to alcohol and to drugs. The choice of future

profession and education is another important factor reported to influence the youth today. For Christian youth one of the challenges is keeping their faith in the world when it is not prestigious to be a believer. In rural areas there are additional economic problems such as unemployment, which seem to influence the overall perspective on life, introducing the feelings of despair, aimlessness and uncertainty. It was also reported by the focus group participants that all the youth are faced with the pressure of materialistic success and a trend now emerging of clearly defined youth subcultures (Emo, Goths, skinheads, etc.).

Synopsis of NGO & Christian Ministry Leadership Focus Groups & NGO Interviews

What roles and functions do NGO's play in today's Russia?
Focus group participants reported that NGO's play a very important role, although their work may seem underrepresented and invisible. Government wants to influence the Russian people's life and values, and it can be productive to some extent (e.g., through television and other media), but it is the NGO's that should and will carry the function of a social catalyst. Most work on improving the morality and rehabilitation from various addictions and disadvantaged situations is done through NGO's. Christian NGO's, however, have a distinct role in that they also try to bring the Gospel to the people, no matter what initial/declared functions they have.

What is the attitude in Russia to NGO's and Missionary Organizations?
People are largely wary of NGO's, especially if they find out that it has a religious dimension (and is not Russian Orthodox), as most people consider only the Russian Orthodox the only true Christian denomination. Sometimes there may be negative publicity, but a lot depends on the trust that has or has not been established in the course of the organization's activity. Religious NGO's / Missionaries that try to work in school and in the education system in general find it incredibly hard to do so. There are two other problems reported: lack of finances and difficulty with finding volunteers. Also, the state might not interfere openly, but in certain cases government representative can give spoken orders and recommendations to discourage cooperation with NGO's.

How willingly do people donate to NGO's and missionaries and what is the minimum amount necessary for a missionary's subsistence?
Financial and other resources of religious NGO's and missionaries are very limited. People who donate the money do so either because they have been greatly motivated to do so by the NGO representative / Missionary or because they have received the help themselves and saw its effectiveness. Missionary support is lower than what a person might otherwise be paid in the marketplace, and many representatives considered that an undesirable situation, since in their opinion a Missionary should not try to find extra jobs for himself, but concentrate on his main functions instead. Missionaries outside Moscow claimed 15,000 Rubles monthly (approximately $600) is the minimum if a person is single. Some say that if a person has a family of his own, 30,000 Rubles is needed monthly.

Youth in today's Russia
What are the characteristics of today's Russian youth?
NGO's and Missionaries report that the youth now receive a lot more information than before and that they have become better informed but at the same time approach messages more selectively due to information overload. The youth are less prejudiced toward spirituality than before and are less likely to think that the idea of God is a thing of the past. At the same time, students are geared more toward relationships, informal communication and sports, as well as entertainment. Most youth have the same basic need as youth internationally – love and acceptance. Although the youth may seem irresponsible, uncommitted, lazy, untrustworthy, and immoral, they are very purposeful and diligent about things that they are truly motivated toward, rather than the values and activities forced upon them by the adults.

What channels/media should be employed to convey information to the Russian youth?
Important channels include first of all electronic media; the Russian youth are becoming increasingly mobile, use computers, Internet, and like to communicate with each other in cyber-space. Dry information is not impressing them anymore, so if something is presented through the format of a lecture, it has to be done interactively and creatively. The preferred media are electronic, and it is important to think of getting the Good News to the youth via a series of SMS. At the same time, informal communication with an emphasis on personal relationships has priority.

What issues, problems and challenges do the Russian youth face?
NGO/Missionary focus group participants stated that for youth graduating from schools face several important issues: finding a job and having a pessimism associated with it when they face tough reality; problem of choice of a boyfriend or a girlfriend; the challenge of self-fulfillment and self-realization; loneliness and low self-esteem; the high value placed by the youth culture on entertainment. Generally, the youth strive to identify with something, to be a part of what would give purpose to their lives and a sense of mission, yet they lack positive role models. The family that is designed to provide such influence, has become unable to do so, due to the lack of healthy homes.

Synopsis of Teachers' Focus Groups

Struggles teachers face with behavior and challenges with students?
In the course of the focus group discussion teachers pointed to such behavioral problems as aggression, anxiety, insecurity, and low self-esteem. However, teachers stated that the main problem is alienation of children and youth from their parents, most of whom do not spend time with the children, do not get significantly involved in their upbringing and declare that the school should deal with these issues. Children and youth are perceived by the educators as increasingly ill-behaved and hyperactive. There is a growing stratification based on family income and social status, which also leads to students' aggression. A growing concern is students' involvement with tobacco and alcohol, influenced by smoking and alcohol consumption in the home.

What are the ways to help the students in their problems and what can teachers do?
Most teachers expressed their concern about the absence of defined and viable policies and programs that would target the young generation, claiming that the behavioral problems stem from a lack of strategy for an organized country-wide system of value-development. Focus group participants also state that family should be the primary source for the child's upbringing; the state should exercise more stringent control over those that neglect their children's upbringing. Another important factor is the wrong values presented by the mass media and assimilated by children and youth; the students spend a lot of time watching television they, watch many sitcoms and other programs and movies, and try to imitate their favorite characters, who often happen to display negative values and behavior. Teachers think that extreme manifestation of such values and behavior should be limited in the mass media. Educators seem to imply by the above answers that they do everything that needs to be done on their side and that their responsibility is to keep up the work they have been doing. The consensus among the educators is that there should be psychological help available to schools, which would not only aid parents and students in dealing with relational problems but also help the teachers to remain in good psychological health; the stress and expectation that the teachers face are reported to be enormous.

What are the pressures that affect students' performance and education?
The students' attention span has reportedly become very limited, which, in turn, lowers the students' performance and stifles the teacher's ability to present the scope and the depth of material defined by the school curriculum. As with the students' behavior, their performance is dependant upon their relationship with the parents and the parents' interest in and responsibility for their children's academic success. The alarming tendency reported by the teachers is the students' apathy toward obtaining knowledge on their own – a skill which they should acquire in order to succeed in high school and in a college or university. The children and youth also do not want to read. This is expressed both in the absence of periodicals and books in homes and a general apathy toward reading. The children and youth like practical assignments (such as physics experiments) and multi-media presentations, but it is an indicator of a lack of academic skills.

Teaching profession and the Community

Teaching style and involvement with students beyond the classroom?
Teachers try to help students beyond the classroom and think that it is an important factor to develop relationships of trust with the children and youth. Many of the students come to teachers for advice, especially because they may not find it in their own family. Unfortunately, the teachers' time is very limited and their load, excessive, so they cannot help as much as they would want. Focus group participants stated that it is impossible to influence children only by the means of school activities and

programs; parents need to be actively involved. In the Russian school system each class has a teacher supervisor (often one teacher supervises several classes); such supervisor is responsible for informing the parents of the students' progress in performance and behavior. Often supervisors join with social workers to visit students' homes, telephone them, and speak with them in the school after classes.

The teaching styles differ. Some older teachers, or teachers in rural areas, often have a strict and somewhat authoritarian style; the expectation, however, is that democratic style should be used. This is not always possible, as teachers report that they sometimes need to be rough and controlling to ensure good discipline at the lesson. Teaching style may depend on the class and age of students; if the discipline is good, then a more democratic style is used; against a class with bad discipline more stringent measures are applied.

How are the teachers treated culturally?
Teachers do not feel appreciated – a feeling that adds to the excessive stress and pressures from parents and the Ministry of Education. The salary is not always adequate to serve as a good compensation to the teacher. As stated above, most parents are usually not supportive of the teacher's efforts to promote good performance, behavior and values among the students, so many teachers experience a significant feeling of frustration. At the same time, many are proud of their calling and see the school, and teachers in particular, as perhaps the single saving factor in the face of deteriorating values, especially in a situation where parents are not always performing their functions well. Yet, most of the teachers are women, a fact that perhaps can be explained by the low financial compensation and a low status of a teacher in society.

How supportive are families?
Teachers are supported only by a fraction of parents, who are normally educated and have a medium to high social status, and whose children do not really need special attention. The parents that do need to be more actively involved do not usually represent a force of positive influence on their children and have only marginal contact with the teacher and school administration. Despite low parent involvement, schools have activities that are designed to give parents an opportunity to see their children in school and to become a more active part in the educational process: master classes (with parents present in the classroom as students), "Open Doors" days (when parents and other adults can visit schools and find out more about various classes, teachers and the process), "open lessons" (during which the parents can be present at the lessons). Social worker periodically hosts Round Tables on various topics.

Synopsis of Students' Focus Groups

Focus groups were convened in several regions of Russia. There were 3 ages represented: 5th -6th, 7th -9th, and 11th grade. Representatives of each of these three ages met as separate focus groups, with as little age differences as possible. All groups were mixed male and female participants of similar social background.

Youth & children's day-to-day reality and pastimes

What do you like to do outside of school?
Most of the students mentioned watching television as one of the favorite pastimes, devoting 4-5 and more hours in classes 5-9. In the 11th grade television viewing is not a priority, since this is the last grade before finishing school and there is an issue of entering a university, with preparation for it reportedly consuming most of the time. Other activities include helping about the house with various chores, as well as sports (important for boys), fitness or dancing (important for girls), as well as spending time outside ("hanging out") with friends. At older age (10th and 11th grades) spending time with a boyfriend or a girlfriend is also a priority.

When asked about favorite music and TV programs, the students mentioned an array of Russian and Western performers, and a big number of television programs, mostly sitcoms, comedies (TNT channel) and entertainment shows; some indicated watching horror movies, and martial arts / action movies.

What pressures occur in relationships, behavior and family?
Students in the 11th grade mentioned entering the University as their major concern, and they reported that this drives most other interests in their life: some had to give up sports to be able to concentrate on studying for forthcoming exams and commented that it is impossible to combine studies and sports. The

driving force behind this is the desire to get a good job and to obtain financial security. Other students emphasized that it is important to be able to combine several interests. Younger students do not specifically mention any pressures related to studies.

Addictions, such as smoking, drinking alcohol and using drugs, were mentioned by students of all ages as a problem both in families and among the students. Other problems included deviant behavior, such as stealing, fighting, extorting money, and diseases, such as STD have and AIDS (although AIDS was not considered an epidemic but rather was mentioned in passing).

Family was mentioned as a source of conflict for many students; focus group participants reported that in some families parents yell at their children, which cause children to withdraw and become asocial, which leads to conflict with peers and problems in studies.

What would you do to help other students get rid of bad habits?
Major recommendations included talking to the person and explaining to him/her the bad consequences of his/her actions; referring him/her to a psychologist; distracting him/her from his/her routine; talking to his/her parents. The majority of students agreed, however, that if the person has set his/her mind on the addiction, it is practically impossible to do anything to help.

The view of church/religion
This question was not specifically asked in any group. The students never mentioned any religious activities or feelings when asked about their pastimes, challenges and values, which may lead us to the conclusion that among the students represented in the focus groups (secondary school children and youth, mostly non-religious) the issue of church/religion is a marginal one, not of primary interest to them. Any further information needs to be obtained and validated by further research.

Values, Plans and Interests

What is a good teacher like?
Students of all ages were unanimous in that a good teacher must be strict but fair. Competence, knowledge of subject was equally important, as was the ability to ensure good discipline in the classroom. At the same time, the students perceive a good teacher as one who has a sense of humor and is also sincere and genuine, someone that they can trust. The issue behind these qualities seems to be the need for a role model, and students project on this ideal teacher the character traits they would like to see in a parent or an adult whom they could respect. Many students also said that they would like the teacher to be male.

What would you like to say to parents/adults?
The most frequent topic among the younger students was the importance of dealing with bad habits and of spending more time with children. Students also would like to say to adults that they should listen to their children occasionally and take good care of themselves. Older students emphasized the importance of giving them more freedom and opportunity.

What are the values of the youth today? Are there any role models?
The most important value was material abundance; without money a person is not worth much. For some students relationships with their friends are important. Older students also pointed out that there is a generation gap between them and the younger students (who are aged 12-13); teenagers are perceived by those in the 11 grade as apathetic, detached from reality, withdrawn and under an excessive influence of destructive subcultures and the mass media. For many students role models seem to be celebrities from television or music.

Who do you want to be / what do you want to do after you finish school?
At earlier age (5-6 grades), celebrity-type professions were named (actress, singer, dancer, soccer player, model), although other professions were indicated as well (lawyer, businessman, policeman, historian). Older students were less likely to talk about becoming a celebrity and mentioned more realistic professions instead. 11th grades also specified that a lot will depend on whether or not they will enter a University.

What engages you most (music, drama, verbal, video, personal interaction)?

Focus group participants mentioned practical assignments and emotional presentation as most engaging. Some also talked about video and music as important in making a presentation interesting for them. At the same time, conditions in the classroom, such as order and lack of noise are an important factor that either enhances or hinders the quality of presentation. Older students claimed that the quality of the presented material is the decisive factor in determining how engaging a presentation will be; they do not have problems with more traditional ways of presentation (such as a lecture, for example), if they like the material. For most students, however, multi-media presentations are important.

Section IV: Raw Data from Focus Groups and Interviews

Government Leaders

Problems/challenges the youth are faced with today:

- It's important that the government would participate in resolving moral problems;
- It is necessary to be involved in the process of moral upbringing of children and teenagers thoughtfully, avoiding extremes (not to be overly didactic);
- Demographical problems of the nation are of a special concern and could be dangerous;
- The decline of family status and prestige demands supreme interference of the government;
- Mass-media is forming a wrong image of a girl for example. That is why it is necessary to look for other ways of conveying the right information. For example, to show films in schools that emphasize correct values, e.g., old Soviet time movies.
- Sensuality and pornography are overwhelmingly present in all spheres of modern life, it needs to be limited technically (e.g. to sell magazines in covers), but most importantly – legislatively.
- Some representatives of the authorities speak about drug and alcohol prevention programs;
- Some measures are being taken
- Some people say: "Safe sex' – is a myth. Instead of distributing condoms, we should speak out loud about a full ABC program – abstinence, be faithful and only if you can't do it, use condoms
- In spite of the propaganda of contraceptives, in Russia 1,6 million abortions were made during one year, every fifth abortion was made by girls under 18;
- Delivery of retroviral medications within the priority program "Health"
- Problem of employment (being solved at a local level)
- Problems of family upbringing – parents can't find a common language with youth;
- There are problematic families where parents are not involved in children's lives, putting everything on school);
- Children and teenagers are not being watched;
- Teenage pregnancies, abortions (large quantities);
- Critical lack of quality education in the sphere of sexuality (physical, psychological, social aspects);
- Low morality – seducing of underage children;
- Examples of work with children in this area – education, individual work, volunteers help, using skits, dramas, games);
- Crisis of a family
- Mass-media presents awful, wrong, filthy, perverted information about sexual relationships;
- Society imposes certain standards in clothing – "make it bare" (it's bad from a moral standpoint, but also even more important, it contradicts hygienic norms);
- Men have sexual relations with underage girls;
- Low self-esteem; Nobody tells them that they are special, that they are loved;
- Sexual education must be moral – and not be simply condoms distribution, forcing to start sexual life;
- Many are ready to overstep all moral norms in the sake of self-seeking goal; No moral limitations;
- STD's, HIV/AIDS
- Under socialism relationship between people were based on moral-ethical principles; after Perestroika, communist moral principles were rejected, but people received noting instead

Not knowing what principles to put as a foundation to teach the next generation, they couldn't give anything valuable to their children;

- Fear for the future of children and youth;
- Many things depend on a family;
- Television – information attack;
- Society is being divided into rich and poor;
- Different level schools;
- Drug and alcohol addiction
- Bad role models – fathers

Characteristics of youth

- More pragmatic than before;
- Infatuation with western values;
- Television – they watch MusTV, MTV, spend a lot of time watching TV in general;
- A number of those who have an active life/civil position, but it's not a large percent;
- As for teenagers now and teenagers 30-40 years ago, of course, it is much more interesting now, a lot more information, many opportunities. But not every teenager can find a place for himself in this quite complicated world.

NGOs & Missionaries

Compensation and cost of living

- Very often missionaries live on less than people make on average. It's wrong.
- On average 15,000 Rubles per month in Krasnoyarsk (it's minimum);
- 30,000 Rubles, if they have a family;
- I think a missionary shouldn't try to earn more on the side, but concentrate completely on ministry.

Do people donate to NGO's and Missionaries?

- If they know you, then they are open to that.
- If you come to a church where they don't know you, people are not open.

How important is the role NGO's play?

- Important role. Not everything that they do is being recognized by the society. Work with addicted people, restoration of morality.
- The government cannot restore the morality (maybe sometimes through television, but to a small degree).
- Our activity is not crossed with the government, but we have the same goal as the government does – to influence people. Of course, our influence – is in spreading the Good News to as many students as it's possible.

What is the attitude toward NGO's and Missionaries?

- Some think that before it was worse, but now it is improving;
- But in general people are quite closed to us – they would rather trust the government, they stay watchful;
- We are "culturally marginalized", we are a Protestant organization;
- People reject us, when they learn that our organization is religious;
- We don't have any problems with administration;
- In general people consider the Orthodox Church to be the correct religion;
- People in principle like to give names;

- At times TV shows provocative films (about "sects"), but there is no negative things against healthy churches;
- Financial problem of NGO/Missionary organization is very nagging; vey limited resources;
- Sometimes there are problems working together with different churches, they don't want to work in unity;
- Volunteer issues; it's hard to recruit them;
- Our purpose – to work in schools, Universities, but there is often a system of passes functions, besides there is an unuttered order not to allow any kind of religious activity in educational institutions;
- The government does not interfere directly, but through unuttered, unwritten regulations, and through law – for instance, a new law on non-government organizations;

What are the distinctive characteristics of youth?
- Youth became more informed
- Now they have their own point of view
- Youth became more active
- Virtual communication, Internet, computers
- New generation doesn't have old prejudices (they don't have the idea that God cannot exist);
- Abundance of information (sometimes they try to avoid the information, try to be selective);
- Youth plunged into entertainment, movies, games;
- Youth needs to be involved in creativity, events;
- Non-formal fellowship;
- Sports;
- They need some kind of environment (similar to clubs), where they could hang out, feel free, express their opinions;
- Youth are like youth all over the world – they look for love and acceptance;
- Often look irresponsible, uncommitted, lazy, untrustworthy, and immoral. But it towards to those things that are important to adults (education, work, etc.). However, if they have purpose (e.g. to save money for a car, to learn to play football well or basketball), then they will be purpose-driven.

What are the ways of conveying information to the youth?
- Dry information doesn't impress;
- We have retreats (used talks, discussions while there, too), but we also use lectures (interactive, questions-and-answers);
- Internet;
- Now we need to be ready to share the Gospel by means of, for example, 5 text-messages (SMS).
- Personal contact and involvement;

What issues/problems/challenges does youth face today?
- The problem of choice for youth (for girls faithfulness is important, for guys – that it would be interesting to spend time with a girl, sex is important)
- Finding a job (and they are shocked at the first experience);
- Self-realization;
- Loneliness;
- Low self-esteem;
- Attempts to fill the heart with pleasures, entertainment;
- In general youth have positive attitude (pessimism appears later when they face reality);
- According to statistics, 95% of Christians became Christians before they turned 25; Majority of people who are HIV infected are younger than 30, that is why we need to actively work with youth.

- Problem of youth is that there are very few healthy families, very often children learn wrong (and sometimes destructive) values; No father or mother (or both).
- No positive role model of a man and a woman.
- The youth look for something to identify with; want to be a part of something that gives meaning and purpose to their lives (goal, mission).
- The "world" is very attractive to the youth.

Pastors and Clergy

What youth programs are used:
- AWANA for children and teenage ministry
- Summer camps
- Concerts, music programs
- ACET (prevention, sometimes used for evangelism)
- Hiking, rafting, do something together
- In the rural areas there're no programs at all
- Fellowship
- Alpha-course (is not working very well in the rural area though because of the format)
- Service clubs (musical, dancing)
- The emphasis on bringing up youth ministers – especially in the rural area – is very important (where they're very short of programs)
- In the villages they tried to start programs for youth, the youth come but did not stay
- Very few young people in the village churches – 2-3 people

Are churches more effectively involved in discipleship or evangelism of the youth?
- Different opinions. They say both are important. At some churches they emphasize evangelism, and the discipleship takes place at the personal example level. Some think it is important to keep the youth that they have; some are for the aggressive approach.

Youth activity in churches:
- Some speak of 70-80% activity level, though others say that there are 30% active, and 30% of those who prompt those first 30% to being active. It is considered that the youth is inert. The activation of the youth very much depends on a real, authoritative youth leader. Some focus group participants mention 10-20% activity and lower.

The most important needs are
- Freedom, independence, attempts to experience everything
- Love, care, acceptance (they are looking for somebody who will accept them as they are)
- Communication, friendship, personal contact
- Being needed, significance, ability to help, take part in something (not being an outside spectator)
- Self-actualization, self-realization, desire to be noticed
- Need of self-identity – they need to find their place
- Desire to be a part of a group, part of something cool; they want to be like everybody else in their circle
- Excessive emphasis on sexuality
- Need to be sure of the future
- They stand against anything artificial, fake

- The appearance, physical attraction is important
- Primary need is not satisfying physical needs, but looking for entertainment
- Understanding
- Respect
- Be accepted
- Self-actualization
- Youth is in search
- Want to be a part of something
- Want to demonstrate their independence, but at the same time, need guidance, older people advice, sometimes physical contact (touch, hug) from older people side
- Need to express their energy, looking for extreme, romanticism
- They follow fashion, they're under peer pressure – though many of them have a desire to change something
- Need role models, idols (people to follow the example of)

The challenges/pressures faced by the youth of Russia
- Economic problems, social insecurity, problems with accomodations (stay with their parents)
- Peer pressure
- Influence of false values imposed by mass-media, and at the same time, a desire to have high-quality printed and other materials
- Low social standards, confusion of social roles and values
- New wave of spiritual search in society (with an inclination to New Age)
- Their pastimes are not organized and no places where they could spend time free of charge
- The institution of family is deteriorating; many families are disadvantaged
- Problem of smoking, drug-addiction and alcoholism, AIDS
- Emphasis of materialistic values
- Dependence on parents
- Negative attitude to born again, evangelical believers
- The society imposes standards of behavior (one has to be rough, etc.)
- Aspiration to get education (for a part of youth)
- Information boom, many sources and forms of information
- Legalization of what used to be unacceptable (e.g. homosexuality)
- The external environment oppresses, imposes fashion (peer, mass-media)
- Television and music – two strong influencing factors
- Pseudo-authorities coming from mass-media
- Stress
- Prejudiced attitude of the society to Christians born from above
- Parents do not spend time with children, children lack trust to parents and feel lack of understanding from their side
- Immoral behavior (premature sexual relationships, drink beer, smoke cigarettes and weed)
- In rural areas common sensation of despair, meaninglessness, uncertainty
- Lack of good movies

Teachers

Problems with students' behavior that teachers experience
- Highly prone to conflicts (including intolerant attitude to other nationalities)

- Poor discipline, bad manners (they spit, fight, curse, chew chewing-gum, use their cell-phones in class)
- Hyperactivity, aggression, anxiety
- Short attention span, it is hard to keep them focused at one thing
- Many different methods used to attract and keep their attention
- Most effective methods are creative assignments, games, but even they are not effective for a long time
- Separation of parents and children, they cannot get on well with each other
- Many parents do not spend time with their children, they are not interested in them (including their school)
- No interest to school subjects
- They think nobody understands them
- Problems with self-esteem – for some it is low, for others – too high
- No proper social skills: unable to get on well with others, unable to compromise
- Apathy toward studying
- Parents think that school should be responsible for the upbringing of the children
- Problems of children in many aspects are predetermined by their parents' behavior (they give bad examples – for example, they drink alcohol or smoke in front of or together with their children)
- Watch TV too much, imitate the behavior of TV-shows' characters
- Children practically don't read, no home libraries
- High interest in the opposite sex (they do it for show, starting in the 5th grade)
- Problems with alcohol
- Moral state of the students – is the most difficult problem (very bad)
- The most important is their class-mates' opinion, they're afraid to become outcasts, so they do anything not to be rejected by their peers (even if it contradicts their usual behavior)

What needs to be done to help solve these problems?
- The main factor is parents – they have to take part in bringing up their children
- Change social policy in the country – no programs of working with youth
- At the local level – individual counseling for students lowest level of knowledge because of the students' low level
- State TV channels create negative image (cigarettes, etc.); reduce the mass-media influence
- Positive reinforcement
- Work with parents
- Supervising teacher for each class; set relationships with a supervised group/class
- Classes/events of vocational guidance
- Patronage of senior students for junior students
- Trainings and psychological counseling for teachers

What influences the students' behavior most?
- First of all, parents, then peers, then mass-media, and only lastly teachers

Students
What do they want to be after finishing school?
- Among the 5th-graders there're more professions connected with being a "star" – for example, a football-player, an actress, a singer, a model, a dancer – though some other professions are there too (personnel officer or a lawyer, individual entrepreneur, police

officer, coalminer, oil-industry worker). The 7th-8th grades have the same tendency, but at the 11th grade the range of professions shrinks and become more realistic – probably because the kids face the reality of having to make up a decision: among professions listed by the 11th-graders are oil-industry worker, a journalist, commercial designer, psychologist, a director, a theatre actress. The supreme task for the 11th-graders is entering an Institution of Higher Education

What is the television-watching pattern?

- Most of school-children watch television for a long period daily: 4-5 hours a day or more, but some (it also relates to the 11th-graders, because of their preoccupation) watch television less than an hour a day. The 5th-9th graders watch TV-shows (especially girls, but with some shows – boys too), different comedies, realities (including those about physic practices or mysticism), humorous shows and Hollywood movies.

What is their choice of music?

- Among the 5th-9th graders' favorite music groups are: pop-music, foreign and Russian; hip-hop/rap (Eminem). The senior students prefer hard music, psi-trans, though some prefer pop-music

Favorite pastimes

- Among favorite occupation are sports (soccer, basketball, cycling, boxing, swimming, dancing – and parcour), but also the school students like to "hang out outside" (in the 8th grade they spoke of friendship with the opposite sex, and taking a girl to the movies), the 11th graders mention bowling, night clubs, computers (Internet). Among occupations which there's no opportunity to do but they would like to try they mention hip-hop and break dancing, different (most of them extreme) sports (sky-jumping, snow-boarding), and music (learn to play a guitar, piano/synthesizer etc.)

What are the qualities of a good teacher?

- It is interesting that the students of different ages had the same answer to the question about a good teacher: he/she has to be strict, but fair and at the same time kind, understanding, able to joke, has to know the subject very well, do not give too much home tasks, not to prejudge. The opportunity to trust a teacher and confess if one have done something wrong, is also very important to children, as well as the ability of a teacher to be a good psychologist and have personified approach and be able to keep discipline in a class.
- Many students expressed a request to have more men-teachers (preferably young and good-looking). At the same time the 11th-graders expressed doubts that anybody would like to become a teacher at the present time.

What are preferred media/methods that are engaging?

- Students consider practical ways the easiest, and also when a teacher uses gestures. Besides, many of them think interesting examples are important, and also demonstrativeness (information presented in a graphical form). Some students said that it is easier for them to read than to hear (but this would be an exception). Among most important ways of information transfer they've mentioned television and video, and computer programs. The 11th-graders, mostly, agreed with that, but stated that the quality of the material prevails over the method and the most important is that a student would listen closely.

What are the problems the youth face?

- Problems with parents
- Problems with alcohol (sometimes drugs), and misbehavior (fighting, stealing, reporting on others, extortion)

- Problems with peers (cannot get on well)
- Problems with the adults in general, and teachers
- AIDS
- STDs (but only in two groups)
- The students said that they lack freedom
- The 11th-graders spoke more of society in general, not only of themselves. For example, they've compared themselves with a younger generation (considering a younger generation – 11-13 years old – apathetic, programmed by TV, stupid, bad mannered), and also they said that nobody understands them, that they do not have ways to express themselves, no ways to fairly get higher education free of charge. The 11th-graders said that the influence of western music and movies, i.e. western culture should be reduced (they consider it destructive), and "do not allow some ideas to Russia". At the same time there were opinions in the 11th grade that a person should have freedom of choice.

What are the inner problems the youth face?
- Among inner problems they've named nervousness, unshared love, passion, feeling bad as a consequence of vicious habits (and the vicious habits themselves), restraint, non-communication as a sequence of problems in the family. The 11th-graders again had a fairly deep self-reflection and spoke of apathetic and parasitic mode of life.

What would you do to help a youth get rid of some bad habits?
- The question about what would they do in order to help another person (a peer) get rid of bad habits was answered as follows: try to explain, advise; take him to a psychologist, isolate from bad company; distract from the reason that provoke the bad habit; provide moral support. But all students of 7-8 and 9-11th grades pointed out that if a person is not willing to change, he will not listen to anyone, and often does not listen to advices if you point at his shortages.

What would you say to adults if you had a chance?
- Among wishes to the adults they've mentioned avoiding vicious habits (do not smoke, do not drink) – up to forbidding alcohol (5th grades); love to children; take care of themselves, their state of health and appearance (not to look old-fashioned). Also the students advised the adults not to stay longer at work (to have more time to spend with kids); be a role-model for their children; "keep to children's advices" (7-8 grades). Also they've mentioned providing more freedom to kids (permit to walk till late at night, allow girls to stay at their friend's for a night), give money and provide a separate place to stay (11th grades). Though the last wishes addressed the 11th grades and sounded quite logically taking into account their cynical attitude.