

Women's Neighborhood Networking Project

This project was a collaborative effort between three cooperating countries: Corvallis, Oregon, Uzhgorod, Ukraine, and Krakow, Poland. The project was funded from 2000-2002 by the US Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs and administered by Oregon State University.



Project Goal: Increase citizen participation in civic life and development of stronger democratic institutions by fostering neighborhood-level coalitions to address local problems.

Summary: Neighborhood-level networks are an effective means of providing mutual assistance in natural disasters or other emergency events. The citizens of Corvallis, Oregon have participated in a project supported by the Benton County Emergency Management Council that uses neighborhood networks to help mitigate the effects of emergencies. This grant from U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs built on the existing strong sister city relationship between Corvallis, Oregon and Uzhhorod, to provide training for members of the Uzhhorod Sister City Association of Citizens in organizing neighborhood-level networks in Uzhhorod for mutual assistance in times of need. The grant activities included initiating contact between emergency service personnel in Uzhgorod and Krakow, Poland, to help build a regional network of emergency service professionals who can share lessons learned and collaborate during large-scale emergencies.

Phase One:

The primary objective of the first phase was to determine the emergency profile of Uzhgorod, including resources available for mitigation and relief, and likely emergency events. The secondary objective was to increase regional resilience by establishing a linkage between the Red Cross chapters and other emergency service providers in Krakow and Uzhgorod. Volunteer neighborhood organizers

were in the fall of 2000. These organizers, together with the coordinators and US participants, conducted a needs assessment in Uzhgorod, focusing on neighborhood-level needs and city level resources for responding to emergency events. A team made up of the Uzhgorod and Corvallis project coordinators met with leaders of the Krakow Chapter of the Polish Red Cross to develop plans for cooperative activities to be held between the cities of Uzhgorod and Krakow.

Phase Two:

The primary objective of the second phase was to provide training in the US for the volunteer neighborhood organizers and the coordinators, focusing on leadership, group process, volunteer management, organizing for emergencies, and working with emergency service professionals. A three-week training program was held in Corvallis, Oregon, for the volunteer neighborhood organizers, with an additional week of training for the coordinators that included emergency planning in the schools.

Phase Three:

The objective of the third phase was to organize five neighborhood networks to provide mutual assistance in case of an emergency. Pairs of neighborhood organizers worked to introduce the concept of neighborhood networks, and began organizing neighborhoods to mitigate emergency situations. They received assistance from the Uzhgorod project coordinators, and from US mentors who traveled to Uzhgorod throughout the organizing period to provide additional training and advice. Also during this phase, a workshop was held in Uzhgorod to bring together emergency service professionals from Krakow, Poland and Uzhgorod, along with members of newly-formed neighborhood networks, to focus on planning and cooperation during emergency events.

Phase Four:

The objective of the final phase was to evaluate the neighborhood networks and help identify resources to strengthen the community response. US team members worked with counterparts in Uzhgorod to survey resources and interview key stakeholders. In addition, a city-wide event was held to provide an opportunity for the public to meet and observe the providers of local emergency services.