Survey of Living Conditions in the Arctic:
The situation with the Kola Saami People
1997 – 2003

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Introduction

The number of Saami population on the Kola Peninsula is about 1900 people. They represent indigenous population. The last census of Saami population was in 1989 during the last national census of population in the Soviet Union. During the last 12 years there was no any census in the Soviet Union and Russia. It means that figures and data in concern of the Saami population are rather approximate.

The number of the indigenous population decreases. The number of assimilated marriages among the Saami increases. The number of well-educated Saami people is very small. The geographic area of Saami reindeer breeding reduces. The Saami gradually lose their traditional way of economics and lifestyles. That is why the necessity of Saami population study on the Kola Peninsula is very strong. It is possible to give some forecasts after our research.

1. Explanatory Statement for the International Project

The Inuit and Saami populations in Inuvialuit, Nunavut, Nunavik, Labrador, Greenland, Alaska, Chukotka, Norway, Sweden, Finland and the Kola Peninsula share a number of economic, cultural and technological conditions in common. This is especially true for the traditional occupations on which parts of these populations still base their livelihood making them dependent on natural resources. However, conditions affecting indigenous populations in the Arctic have changed rapidly in the last century. Many indigenous people now mix traditional activities with paid work. As a result, they are adapting traditional lifestyles. These adaptations have not always been successful. Indicators show higher unemployment, lower income levels. Poorer health and more social problems among Inuit and Saami than among the rest of the population in these countries. On the other hand, many Inuit and Saami people function well and have managed to combine the traditional and modern way of life. As a result, it is important, from the perspective of policy planning as well as research, to be able to document the present level of the conditions of life in these areas and to detect key variables, that determines good or bad living conditions.

In spring 1997 Statistics Greenland initiated an international research project on the topic “Survey of Living Conditions in the Arctic: Inuit, Saami and the Indigenous Peoples of Chukotka 1997 – 2003”. There is an international research team consisting of scholars from the universities and research centers of Northern Europe, Russia, the United States, Canada and Greenland. Today 23 researchers from 8 countries participate in this project. One of the extended
outcomes of the study will be the development of a new research design for comparative investigations of the living conditions of the Inuit and Saami populations in the Arctic. This will include the drawing up of a battery of nominal and operationalised indicators of living conditions based on earlier theoretical literature and consultations with aboriginal organizations and public hearings.

2. **The development of a new research design**

In 1994 Statistics Greenland carried out the first study of living conditions in Greenland since the introduction of Home Rule. It consisted of 147 questions and 1,121 respondents participated in the study. As research within the field of living conditions was generally at a pioneering stage in Greenland, the research design was very much a copy of the Scandinavian model for such studies as were the living conditions indicators which were those generally used in the Scandinavian tradition (Eriksen & Uusitalo 1987, Hansen 1990). Even though the Greenlandic survey was inspired by the Scandinavian approach, the questionnaire primarily contained material questions. This was due to the lack of basic statistics in a number of areas.

3. **Improved decision-making and the concept of sustainable development**

The Arctic Council has defined sustainable development not only in terms of environmental protection but also as economic and social development as well as being a matter of securing the cultural well-being of the inhabitants of the Arctic (Arctic Council 1996). We think that focusing also on the social aspects of sustainable development is necessary to obtain a proper understanding of how to manage both living and non-living resources in the Arctic in a sustainable way. Including human activities, the political-economic systems, the specific cultures and the technological level in the concept of sustainable development are crucial for our understanding of how resources were managed in the past, how they are managed today and how they should be managed in the future. Only by recognizing the social and cultural distinctiveness of the different areas in the Arctic is it possible to determine the proper policies to be carried out to secure sustainable development.

4. **Local Participation**

It is a main objective of this project to develop a new set of living conditions indicators that mirrors the specific culture and life forms of Inuit and Saami peoples. This is, among other things, to avoid applying an underlying notion of well-being or quality of life that reflects the values and norms of late industrialized societies and not the value systems of the Inuit and Saami peoples. This process of identifying proper indicators of living conditions depends heavily on communication with the respondents and their organizations and on the knowledge of Saami and Inuit researchers. It is therefore an integrated part of this project to establish groups within the project organization consisting of Inuit and Saami representatives with this knowledge. Contacts to relevant regional Inuit and Saami organizations have already been made in all 11 areas of the project. Besides this, both Inuit and Saami researchers participate in the project and Inuit and Saami students will be involved in the data collection process. The underlying rationale of this project is therefore to rely on a dialectical exchange of knowledge between indigenous and non-indigenous researchers, and between researchers and the Inuit and Saami peoples.

5. **Research guidelines**

This project will follow and implement the recommendations listed by the National Science Foundation and ARCUS in connection with research on the human dimensions of the arctic systems (ARCUS 1997).
6. Participation of the Murmansk region in preparatory work of international scientific project

The first contact with initiators of this international project took place in August 1997 in Kirkenes. Anna Prakhova and Oleg Andreev were invited to the Barents Secretariat for consulting and introduction to the project’s coordinators Thomas Andersen and Jens-Ivar Nergard. There were meetings with other Russian scientists and experts organized by the foreign party as well. As a result the Barents Center for Social Research was chosen to be responsible organization representing the Kola Peninsula.

In September 1997 Project’s Coordinator for Scandinavia Professor Jens-Ivar Nergard and consultant of the Barents Secretariat Britt Gronaa visited Murmansk and Lovozero, had a meeting with Saami public, visited Voronyey river, discussed social problems of Saami people with Anna Prakhova and Nina Afanasieva, the President of Kola Saami Association. Professor Jens-Ivar Nergard conducted in towns lectures on Saami people philosophy at Humanitarian and Teachers’ Training Institutes, had instructive meetings with researchers and students, explained the goals and tasks of the scientific project.

In the beginning of 1998 an initiative research group was organized, consisting of Evelina Tsekhotskaya, Valery Mironchenko, Svetlana Makeenko, Denis Moldavantsiev, Zoya Prokofieva, Svetlana Ustimenko, Irina Birukova as well as some other researchers of institutes of the Kola Science Center Russian Academy of Science and post-graduate students of Murmansk universities. This group made a great scope of theoretical and methodological work. The group studied almost all Soviet and Russian publications on Saami topic as well as some foreign sources. There was a series of methodological seminars conducted by the group devoted to the deeper entry in the history of study of indigenous peoples of the North and in various aspects of topic of scientific research.

During those years three variants of questionnaires were elaborated in Russian for Saami people of the Kola Peninsula. The foreign colleagues approved them. But the search for the general methodological approach, necessity to elaborate a unified questionnaire for all countries made us to continue our work and improve the questionnaire form.

A great deal of translation work from English into Russian and visa versa was done. This work was fulfilled by Natalya Karbovskaya, Julia Kotochigova, Victoria Shirokaya, Victoria Kukushkina, Julia Filatova, Viktoriya Novoseljtseva. The main scope of work regarding elaboration of the program of research, completing, coordination and editing of international questionnaire was fulfilled in computers through e-mail which considerably simplified the work of international scientific project.

7. Coordination of the research project at the Kola Peninsula

To coordinate the scientific project an advisory council was organized in the Murmansk region. It consisted of the following members: Oleg Andreev, who represented the Barents Center for Social Research, Anna Prakhova from Committee of Indigenous Peoples Affairs of the Murmansk Region Administration, Nina Afanasieva from Kola Saami Association. The colleagues of the Barents Center for Social Research informed of the scientific discussions, took part in different Saami official and public events, thirdly made reports at the sessions of the Board of the Kola Saami Association, chairpersons and representatives of the district branches of the Association.

The Barents Center for Social Research always agreed its principles with representatives and leaders of Association of the North Indigenous Population of the Russian Federation (RAIPON).
Larisa Abrutina, being a Vice-President of Association, renders us a great assistance. In its turn she is a head of our scientific research in Chukotka autonomous region. In 2001 and 2002 Larisa Abrutina visited Murmansk, Apatity and Lovozero. During her mission trips the Russian approaches and suggestions on conducting research on the Kola Peninsula and Chukotka as to the content of the Russian version of questionnaire were coordinated and specified.

In September 2001 professor from Canada Gerard Duhaime together with the group of post-graduate students from Canadian and European universities visited Murmansk, Lovozero, institutes of the Kola Science Center in Apatity. Gerard Duhaime is a supervisor of our project in the Northern territories of Canada. Exchange of opinions during his lectures and meetings helped us to clear up the views of Canadian researchers and their experience in the study of living conditions of Inuits. In our turn we shared with foreign guests the Soviet and Russian researchers’ experience in the study of quality and living standard of indigenous population of the North of Russia.

At the regular sessions of International Steering Committee of the SLICA the principled theoretical and practical questions of research were discussed. Over 10 sessions and conferences of the scientific working groups were held during 1997 – 2002. Due to some financial difficulties representatives of the Murmansk scientific group could not participate in all sessions but were well informed. During those years there were conducted meaningful and complicated scientific discussions, conferences, sessions of international scientific council and meetings with the scientists representing European part of the project in the following cities: in 1998 in Slagelse (Denmark), Tromso (Norway), Quebec (Canada); in 1999 in Stockholm (Sweden), Moscow (Russia), in 2000 in Scottsburg (Denmark), Montebello (Canada), London (Great Britain); in 2001 in Stockholm (Sweden), Nuuk (Greenland), Lissabon (Portugal); in 2002 in Washington (the USA), Rovaniemi (Finland). The next session of international scientific council is scheduled on October 2002 in Inari (Finland).

As a result of intensive and laborious mutual work of the scientists from different countries the unified international questionnaire was elaborated and approved in spring 2001. The questionnaire was designed for a pilot research and contained accumulated experience of study indigenous population of the North in Europe, America and Russia. The unified pilot questionnaire was elaborated thanks to the mutual concessions of representatives of various national scientific schools and trends, such as: Scandinavia, Canada, the USA, Greenland and Russia. The pilot questionnaire form turned out to be quite voluminous. It consisted of 62 pages of printed text and over 500 questions and sub-questions. The rated time of one interview varied from 1 hour and 30 minutes to 1 hour and 45 minutes. The questions were divided into 4 main groups including the basic trends of vital activities of indigenous population of the North:


8. Pilot research in 2001 among Kola Saami people

By decision of International Steering Committee the pilot study was held at the Kola Peninsula in summer 2001. In some countries the first variant of the unified international questionnaire was tested later due to the lack of financing. In course of research representatives of indigenous population were involved. During the pilot study in the Murmansk region 62 respondents were interviewed. The interviewers were people with university degree. The senior students of universities assisted them. Instructions always preceded the interviews. In each district of the Murmansk region persons responsible for the interview were appointed.

On the Kola Peninsula pilot study was held among representatives of Saami people in the following places: 1) in Murmansk, 2) in Lovozero district, 3) at the settlement Loparskaya, 4) in settlement Ostrovnoy; 5) in village Yona. People responsible for pilot research were only
persons of Saami nationality: Nina Afanasieva, Valentina Sofkina, Lidiya Bolshunova, Vladimir Afanasiev, Tatiana Tsmykailo. The Barents Center for Social Research summarized the first empirical results of the interview during the fourth quarter of 2001 and presented them in January 2002 to the Committee of Indigenous Population of the North at the Murmansk Region Administration, to the Murmansk Regional Duma (Parliament), Kola Saami Association, Association of Small Indigenous Population of the North, Siberia and the Far East of the Russian Federation (RAIPON) and to the International Steering Committee of international project.

The results of pilot research in the Arctic regions were studied thoroughly in the national scientific groups and at the international scientific council. It was pointed out that the questionnaire form was excessively complicated, overloaded with scientific terminology and some questions seemed incomprehensible to common people. It was decided to change the structure of the questionnaire form as well. It should have been easier to understand. The final questionnaire consisted of the following 8 parts: 1) Your Family; 2) Your Background; 3) Your Work and Traditional Activities; 4) Health; 5) Housing and Standard of Living; 6) Social Activities; 7) Your Values, Religion and Spirituality; 8) Your Community and Environment.

9. Financing

This scientific project has no united centralized financing even in spite of support of such a powerful international organization as Arctic Council. One of the principles of participation in the international research project is the search and fundraising for research by each national scientific group from the state and non-governmental budgets and funds of their countries. It should be noted that during these years practically all countries which participated in the project faced financial problems. Two times there happened to be almost deadlock situations, which threatened to collapse the international project. To be more precise, the Russian participants were very nearly to leave the project. The Russian group (Kola Peninsula and Chukotka) had the worst problems with financing. But thanks to the mutual efforts, and firstly to the Scandinavian and Greenland coordinators, financial problems are solved, even if they are solved sometimes quite late.

In 1997 – 2002 the Barents Center did a great work on searching for financial sources for the project in Russia. We prepared detailed business-plan, sent letters, conducted negotiations with authorities of the Murmansk Regional Administration, Murmansk Regional Duma (Parliament), Russian Fund of Applied Research, with Russian Fund of Humanitarian Research and some other powerful funds. Besides, we conducted negotiations with the CEO of the Kola Mining-Metallurgical Company, stock venture “Apatit”, stock venture “Kolenergo”, some fishing fleets. But unfortunately, we didn’t manage to find financing for our project in Russia. Till present the project was financed from Norwegian and other international sources, especially due to support of our partners from Norway, Greenland, Denmark. Local authorities of the Murmansk region, Association of the Kola Saami people, Association of indigenous small peoples of the North, Siberia and the Far East (RAIPON) provide us with necessary moral support.

For conducting the data collection in accordance with the international scientific standards we need more financial means. The budget of research includes the following items of expenditure: 1) Elaboration of the final version of the Russian variant of questionnaire; 2) Translations; 3) Payment of the work of interviewers; 4) Payment of the work of researchers and advisors; 5) Payment of the work on preparation of research report; 6) Translation of report into English; 6) Publishing in the printing-office the questionnaire form, printing expenses; 8) Stationery; 9) Purchase of the hardware (computer and computer equipment); 10) Purchase of the software (statistics program SPSS); 11) Postal costs, telephone, e-mail; 12) Business trips and transport costs; 13) Participation in the sessions of International Steering Committee; 14) Taxation and social charges; 15) Other unforeseen expenses.
10. The organization of data collection in 2002-2003

The data collection is scheduled to be carried out in the Murmansk region in 2002 – 2003. 500 respondents should be interviewed on the Kola Peninsula. Then we have to do a lot of work on generalization of received data. The final report in Russia and then in English containing results of research on the Kola Peninsula will be submitted to the authorities of the Murmansk region and International Steering Committee in the 2-nd half-year 2003. We plan to prepare generalized results in aspect of each country and territory, to make comparative analysis of the regions, to prepare recommendations for the state authorities and non-governmental organizations of indigenous Arctic population.