

School Without Walls

Annual Report 2009–2010



Reaching the Next Generation in the Former Soviet Union

www.russian-ministries.org



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A REPORT FROM A NEXT GENERATION ON THE MOVE WITH THE GOOD NEWS OF THE GOSPEL IN THE FORMER SOVIET UNION



There is so much change in our globalized, wired world. But what has hasn't changed is the good message of Jesus that can transform individuals, communities and countries.

As everywhere, Russia, Ukraine and all of the former Soviet Union are changing. A new generation that didn't experience Soviet tyranny is coming to leadership. With its rich national resources, Russia is again rising to superpower status, a resurgence that is still tinged by totalitarianism. With 20 years since the collapse of atheistic communism and widespread spiritual searching, many people in the former Soviet Union who were left empty by the dialectic materialism of Marxism are now seeking secular happiness in the same worldly possessions, pursuits and materialism that preoccupy much of the rest of the world—and its youth. And from only a decade ago when Russia's arms were flung wide to the West, a new generation shaped by extreme nationalism and anti-Westernism is now arising.

Even as young Russians march in nationalistic Nashi youth movement parades, shouting slogans of hate, there is another powerful Next Generation movement on the march with God's love for Russia and the other countries of the former Soviet Union. School Without Walls (SWW), spawned by Russian Ministries, is spreading the good news of the gospel across the former Soviet Union, with 1,672 students in 64 locations, currently part of its movement. Even as an epidemic of drug use, HIV and other scourges sweep across Russia, devastating its youth, there are now 6,800-7,000 young Christians who have been part of SWW since 2004 and who are now reaching out to the orphans, addicts, and sick among them with the helping hands of Jesus.

Churches in the former Soviet Union were shaped by the restrictions and repressions of communist times. Some now find it very difficult to relate to contemporary youth. School Without Walls is especially suited to helping bridge this generational gap.

Mission of Russian Ministries:
To promote holistic, indigenous evangelism, church-planting, church growth and Christian leadership in the former Soviet Union by developing creative and strategic ministries and facilitating partnerships between nationals and Western Christians.



PETER DEYNEKA

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Reaching the Next Generation in the former Soviet Union



I was born in the Rovno Region of Ukraine. After graduating from high school I started studying at the Kremenets Teachers' College. I became interested in God and started attending church, but was not satisfied. I attended every service, Bible study groups, and every possible meeting and event, but did not come to know and understand God any better through it.

Later I was invited to study in SWW in another church in town. Here, I realized I had found what I sought so long—the opportunity to discover truths in God's Word. When I was invited to participate in running a Christian summer camp at one of the SWW sessions, I joyfully agreed. The moment came in my life when I decided to follow the Lord, and was baptized. It was a great joy for me to study, coming to know the Lord through my studies.

But the time came when I realized that studying is not enough, and that I need to also pass on the knowledge I have acquired to others. I prayed for a long time about the best way to do that, and the Lord showed me—I decided to move out of the apartment I had been living in, and into college dorms, so as to have more opportunities to interact with non-Christians and share what I've learned about God with them.

— Sergey, Kremenets, Ukraine



SWW students are helping to revitalize churches in the former Soviet Union. As SWW spreads, more churches are becoming lighthouses that will beckon to the many who still do not know Christ in the former Soviet Union. SWW youth are also mightily on the move outside their churches. Even with all the advance of the gospel in the past 20 years, the former Soviet Union is still one of the most unevangelized regions of the world. The witness and work of these Next Generation missionaries is desperately needed.

In this update, we hope to help you see the faces and hear the stories of some of the SWW students you have helped support. As they will tell you, Christ has changed their lives. Now they want to change their communities and nations for Christ.

STATISTICAL OVERVIEW

During the 2009-2010 school year, 1,672 students from over 250 churches in Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan participated in SWW.

Having sent their young members to study at SWW, these churches have chosen a path towards growth, development, and emphasizing active ministry and evangelism. We believe that these schools will, with time, become a driving force behind the evangelical movement in the post-Soviet sphere and will not only transform individual people's lives, but will make a huge impact on society as a whole.

About 300 teachers taught at SWW throughout the year, seeking to teach, encourage, develop Christian character in their students, as well as, by their example, attract modern Christian youth to ministry. About 80% of the teachers are local church leaders—pastors, deacons, and those responsible for teaching, social, or evangelistic projects.

In Central Asia and the Northern Caucasus, regions that are most closed to the gospel, the SWW program accomplished the following during this past year:

- 520 students were trained through 180 seminars in 22 schools
- 58 teachers provided training
- 65 churches participated
- 13 new churches were planted
- 15 special training conferences took place
- 22,250 children were reached with the gospel through summer camps, sports ministry, Project Hope and other Christmas projects, and the puppet ministry
- 153 people were baptized.

I was born into a non-Christian family. Despite the fact that none of my relatives attended church, I still believed in God. After some time my mom started attending church, and I went with her. One Sunday my mom repented. This served as an example for me, and after a short time I also came to God. Last year they announced in our church that SWW would be starting in September. SWW served as a stimulus for my spiritual growth. And I noticed it did the same for others as well.

Thanks to the atmosphere of openness and trust in our SWW sessions, the relationships in our group are growing closer and stronger. At first people would arrive for SWW sessions one at a time, now they show up in groups! Thanks to fellowship and our classes I became much more involved in the life of the church. We regularly visit orphanages, where we spend time with the children. Our team also visits a nursing home where we tell the elderly about God and spend time with them. Since our SWW program has a missions emphasis, we are thinking and praying about missions—how to share the gospel with Kabardins, Balkars, and other nations living around us. There are many Muslims around us who do not know God.

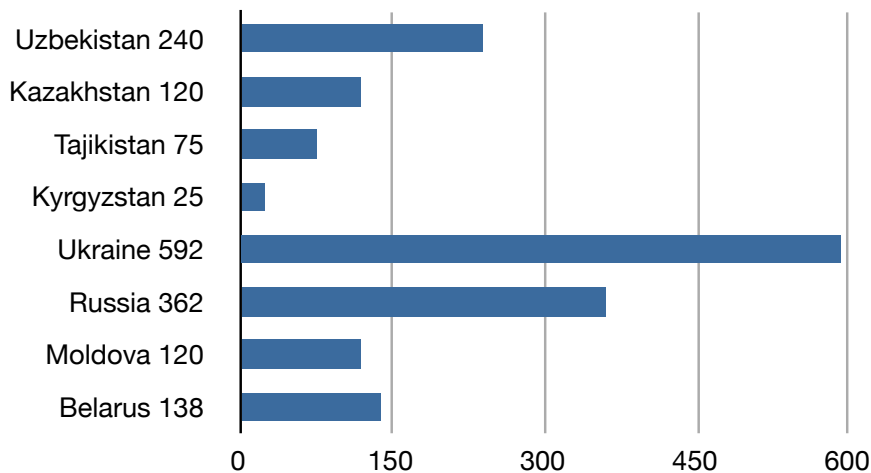
Having gone through SWW, I'm thinking that this blessing from God came for a reason. In order to serve the Lord more and better I must learn constantly.

*—Ekaterina Poroshina,
age 20,
Prokhladny,
Kabardino-Balkaria,
Russia*



According to church leaders, this non-formal approach is producing effective results and can serve as a model for other training programs. We see that God is blessing our work there, and that churches are rising to the challenge of taking on an active missions role.

Number of School Without Walls Students by Country for 2009–2010



SWW has also significantly expanded in Russia this year, despite political changes that favor the predominant role of the Russian Orthodox Church. Ten new affiliates were started and the number of students increased significantly to 365. The majority of these students are actively involved in ministry in their local churches, in evangelistic projects, short-term missions, camps for children and youth, orphanage ministry, youth ministry, leading small groups, and puppet ministry.

Overall, this year SWW students have demonstrated extraordinary creative potential in their ministry. In Ukraine, SWW is becoming available for people undergoing rehabilitation for drug addiction. Students from the Kiev SWW organized a short-term missions trip to Sri Lanka. Many students are starting to demonstrate their spiritual gifts of teaching and are getting involved in discipling and studying the Scriptures with younger generations.

SWW motivates students to think. I'm a youth leader in Bethany Church in Chisinau, Moldova, and after the "Youth Evangelism" seminar, two SWW students who are part of the youth leadership team of our church, started asking me questions about what we do and about the philosophy and strategy of our youth ministry—questions, which no one had been asking before, and this delighted me. It has become much easier and more productive to work in our youth team now that a majority of our leadership team has gone through the SWW program. There are more thoughtful people participating in the ministry. There is also a noticeable increase in interest in ministry since before SWW began. I can also see an increased level of productivity in the students' ministry. Their ministry has become higher quality, bears more fruit, and is more conscious and well thought-out.

**—Roman Chitak,
youth leader,
Bethany Church,
Chisinau,
Moldova**

We have used the SWW program to prepare young men undergoing drug and alcohol addiction rehabilitation in a local rehabilitation center for leadership positions. SWW has become an indispensable tool in preparing these young men to enter or re-enter church life, as well as motivating them to participate in ministry in local churches. The program could not be better suited for rehabilitation work. Its flexibility is easily integrated into a rehabilitation program and further preparation of people for ministry. It is too early to talk about concrete results, but I can say with confidence that SWW is a wonderful support for our rehabilitation work.

**—Dmitry,
Bryansk,
Russia**



SWW MINISTRY HIGHLIGHTS IN BELARUS AND BEYOND

One of the main goals of SWW is “to prepare God’s people for works of service” (Eph.4:12), rather than to merely pass on knowledge. According to national coordinators in Belarus, SWW provides students with unprecedented opportunities for ministry involvement. As a result, the level of ministry involvement there is high: 138 students are currently involved in 281 ministry initiatives within their churches.

The number of those getting involved in ministry is growing steadily. A large portion of these ministries take place within the church, and are aimed at those who come to church through personal witness or through accessible methods of missions work. Churches are increasingly emphasizing mission work beyond the church.

Also, in many regions, the church is facing harassment and even open persecution by authorities or members of the local religious majority.

The situation in Central Asia also remains difficult, with churches experiencing pressure from the government. This limits the growth of SWW in some parts of the region.



NEW COURSE AND SEMINAR HIGHLIGHTS

This school year a large number of teachers were involved in teaching at SWW, the majority of whom are church leaders. In addition to standard courses, the following new courses and seminars were developed and taught this year, demonstrating SWW’s commitment to flexibility and responding to the needs of local churches:

- Initiating and Organizing Church Outreach Projects
- Basics of Church History and Doctrine
- Dialogue with the Russian Orthodox Church
- Methods of Teaching the Bible to Children
- Developmental Psychology for Children’s Workers
- Evangelism Through Sports
- Christian Leadership Principles
- History of Islam
- Outreach to Muslims

When we first started SWW, only a handful of people were involved in ministry. Now we have joint ministry projects. The Prokhladny SWW group regularly visits an orphanage in the village of Krem-Konstantinovskoye, and the Nalchik SWW group does missions work in the town of Tyrnyauz.

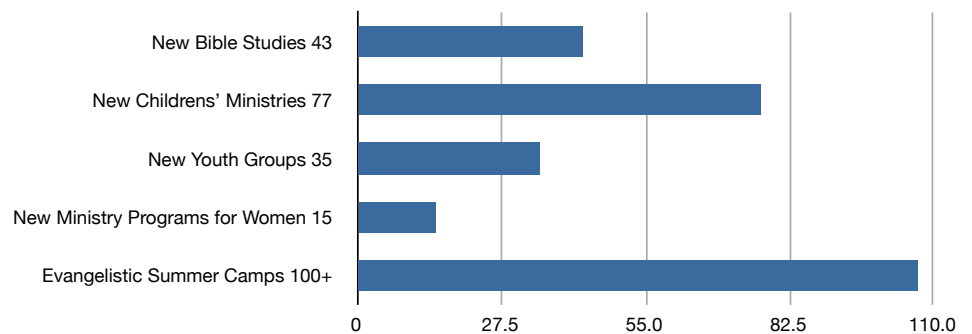
The Prokhladny students regularly visit an orphanage, where they sing, tell the children about Christ and play soccer, volleyball, checkers, chess, etc. with them. They have also made good contacts with the youth of the orphanage. Some of the children regularly read the Bible and pray. Our youth are accepted and liked by the children. Some of our students are actively involved in the children's lives. For instance, one student, Vadim, has become friends with a particular boy. He cares for him and recently bought him a new sports outfit. They now play soccer together in their new outfits! You can often hear a joyful cry in the orphanage, "The Baptists have arrived!" and everyone runs to meet the students. This is our first joint ministry project in the Prokhladny SWW, and it has been very successful. The students all received practical assignments for the summer, and by the fall they should see even more fruits of practical ministry of SWW students.

The Nalchik group decided to take on missions work in Tyrnyauz. There have been no full-time missionaries or church leaders there for two years. There are 12 believers there. The youth travel there for Sunday morning services, to preach, pray, etc. This ministry is just beginning, but we are planning on developing it, as there are many Balkars in this town in need of salvation!

—Sergey,
SWW coordinator,
Kabardino-Balkaria,
Russia



SWW Students' Creative Initiatives



- Systematic and step-by-step preparation of youth leaders in Belarus Baptist churches
- Regional and national youth conferences for Belarus Baptist Union churches
- Sports ministry including soccer and basketball leagues in Belarus
- "Battery" motivational conference for SWW students and graduates in Moldova
- SWW short-term missions trip from Moldova to Tatarstan
- The "You are Special" youth conference in Labytnangi, Siberia
- A youth conference in Perm, Russia, attended by 80 people
- The annual "A Christian for Our Time" youth conference in Central Russia
- Short-term missions trip to Sri Lanka by Kiev SWW students
- Two events in Moldova: "Time to Live I" aimed at Chisinau high school students, and "Time to Live II," which took place in a smaller town, both of which informed young people about the dangers of human trafficking.

Also, this summer SWW students are planning the following:

- Short-term missions trip to Mongolia by students from the Krasnoyarsk region, Siberia
- "Lighter" youth arts festival in Moldova
- A sports ministry project organized by 10 churches in Tajikistan: 10 SWW students will, over the course of 11 days, hold "Kids Games" in 10 regions of Tajikistan, reaching 1,000 children
- More than 7,000 children and teens are expected to hear the gospel this summer through Christian camps connected with SWW.



Also this summer, the first festival for SWW students and graduates called, "Time to Live, Time to Serve" took place from June 17-20, 2010 by the Azov Sea in Ukraine. More than 500 young people from Ukraine, Russia, Belarus, Moldova, and Central Asia took part in the festival. Below are reflections on the festival by Russian Ministries' Senior Vice-President, Sergey Rakhuba.

Reflections on SWW Festival/Congress

To mark the end of the 2009-2010 School Without Walls (SWW) academic year and the beginning of an active summer ministry season for SWW students and graduates—including evangelistic summer camps, evangelistic sports outreaches, youth clubs and other active outreach ministry initiatives—a very special event took place from June 17-20, 2010: the first-ever School Without Walls Time to Live, Time to Serve Festival/Congress. The purpose of the festival was to honor the initiative of young School Without Walls leaders by bringing together the entire SWW staff and student body for a time of celebration, spiritual refreshment, and personal rededication for more active ministry on behalf of their churches in their communities. The festival took place at a former Soviet sanitarium located on the Azov Sea in Ukraine. More than 520 participants from 10 different countries in the former Soviet Union attended, including Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, and the Central Asian countries.

During the four-day festival, young people had the chance to share their experiences, worship corporately with other SWW students and staff, and also learn how to be more effective in their ministries through special seminars and workshops. Festival planners were amazed by the enthusiastic response of the young people who demonstrated that, despite all of the political, economic and religious challenges impacting the former Soviet Union, they are eager to push ahead, taking the baton of faithfulness and spreading the gospel in their communities.

To a certain extent, young people, with their renewed energy and enthusiasm, in some way challenged the comfort zone of the older generation through their approach to worship, preferred style of music and progressive ideas about new, creative ministry opportunities, using technology to more effectively reach their contemporary generation. As a result of the conference, about 50% of the young people made commitments to go beyond ministry in their own communities and mobilize their churches and peers to participate in evangelistic short-term mission trips to the most remote regions in Russia (including Arctic Siberia, border of Mongolia, and even beyond their own countries) in order to spread the gospel and help the evangelical movement grow there as well.



In addition to SWW students and graduates, it was wonderful to have all of the SWW coordinators from 64 different locations where SWW is currently taking place, as well as from new locations where we are planning to expand SWW in the future. The festival was a turning point for many who learned from the experience of others as well as from the 27 national speakers who led various workshops and presented new ministry ideas, which are relevant for the current situation in the former Soviet Union.

Each day of the festival program was designed to bring spiritual growth to participants in a special way.

The theme of the first day was a **DAY OF WORSHIP** and was accompanied by contemporary, upbeat Christian music as well as words of encouragement from several speakers, including Yuri Sipko, the former president of the Baptist Union of Russia. It was great to see the faces of young people, radiating with desire and readiness for ministry, and the sea of hands that was raised to God, as both a response and promise to be faithful in expanding God's Kingdom in their communities and countries.

The theme of the second day of the festival was a **DAY OF DISCOVERY**. All of the classes, workshops and presentations that day were organized to help young people rediscover their relationship with God, their leadership role in their church and community, and new, creative ways to grow in their ministry and to get others involved in outreach to their communities. On this day, students and leaders shared ministries that they discovered have brought great results and are impacting their communities.

The theme of the third day was a **DAY OF DEDICATION**, which gave everyone the opportunity to rededicate their lives and gifts to God for ministry. It was wonderful to see about 70 young people come forward, kneel down, and pray in response to this challenge.

As I stood and praised God during this time of rededication, I once again thanked Him for the vision He gave us for School Without Walls in response to our prayer for a new strategy to help equip the evangelical church in the former Soviet Union under the current, difficult realities. I also thanked God for how He is now using this program to reach, train, mobilize, and equip young people for ministry in the former Soviet Union. It was tremen-



"I was impressed by the fact that this festival really did change people's mentality. Walls were actively breaking, while bridges were being built. Our country, obviously, has a long way to go, but I can say that these kinds of events are relevant and need to happen more often."

—Roman, from Irpen, Ukraine

"I greatly enjoyed the instruction and encouragement I received through the workshops and the speakers at the festival. I felt my calling confirmed and was filled with a desire to serve God. Thank you for good organization and a wonderful opportunity to mix 'business and pleasure.' This was my first time at the seaside!"

—Galina, from Belarus

"Dear brothers and sisters, May God bless you! I thank God for the work you do that His name might be praised among many tribes and nations. I believe that when the years go by the seeds you have planted today will bring much fruit for God's Kingdom. These days spent in God's presence were a blessing not only for us, but also for brothers and sisters in Uzbekistan. I believe that the encouragement we have in our hearts from this celebration will influence the lives of our people. God bless you."

—Timur, from Tashkent, Uzbekistan



dous to see this large group of young people who represented only about one-fifth of the total SWW student body, and to realize that these young people are making an enormous difference for the Kingdom.

I would like to thank all of our ministry partners and supporters who faithfully support School Without Walls. I want to reassure you that your strategic investment in this program is making a difference for now and eternity!

Sergey Rakhuba
Senior Vice President

Prayer requests

Please pray that individual local SWW chapters would become a part of the vision and ministry of local churches, and would not simply remain a separate, parachurch project.

Please also pray for short-term missions trips, camps, and other summer projects organized by SWW students.

Please pray for sufficient resources for the SWW program in 2010-2011.

Please pray that national Christians would continue to take increasing ownership for raising SWW resources from national sources.

Most importantly, pray that these ministry projects would not end with the summer, but would continue throughout the year for the growth of churches and the expansion of God's Kingdom.

FROM ALL OF OUR NEXT GENERATION LEADERS AND EVERYONE AT RUSSIAN MINISTRIES, THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTNERSHIP IN MINISTRY THROUGH SCHOOL WITHOUT WALLS.



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