

**Conference edition: see page 5**

## A new BEARR for a new situation

**A**t our Annual Conference in November, I announced that BEARR had formed a new cooperative relationship with Allavida, the NGO that developed from Charity Know How. Why have we done this? What is involved? How might BEARR evolve?

Many readers of the Newsletter will be familiar with the wider background. Donor, especially DFID, funding for projects in Russia has shrunk, as centrally-determined priorities have changed. Decentralisation, notably within the EU's TACIS programme, has added obstacles for smaller voluntary organisations without in-country representation. Similarly, unrestricted funds, including general corporate giving, have become and will remain scarce.

Against this background, during 2004 the Trustees and Daryl Hardman, then our Director, reviewed future prospects for BEARR. We recognised first that Russia has yet to become a reliably democratic society.

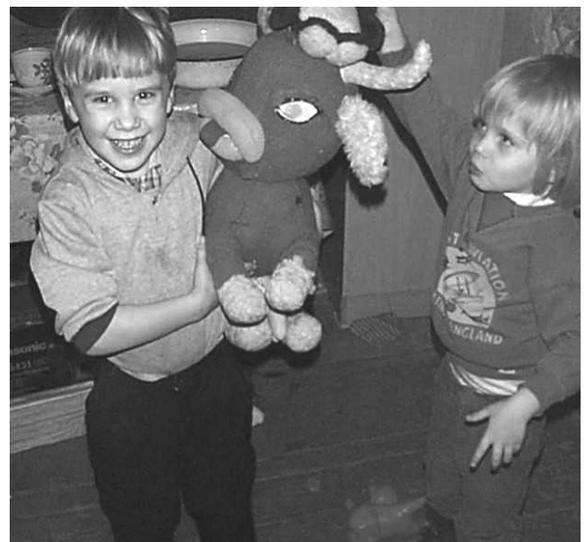
**by Michael McCulloch,  
Chairman, The BEARR Trust**

Russian voluntary organisations are an essential part of civil society. Promoting their status, role and capacity is a task to which external partners can still contribute value. BEARR's comparative advantage lies mainly in the health and social sectors. Projects are the principal means by which we can achieve impact, and they underpin BEARR's other activities. However, looking ahead, it was also clear that BEARR could devote only very modest resources of its own to identifying and developing new projects.

We concluded that, to be sustainable, BEARR had to become leaner as an organisation, and find a new approach to project work.

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Children at a social integration project at the Uspekh Centre in Pervouralsk, one of BEARR's partner NGOs

## A NEW BEARR

What is involved in practice? There are three key elements:

- BEARR's cooperation agreement with Allavida, through which we have contracted Allavida to provide our 'core function'
- increased reliance on voluntary, part-voluntary, or outsourced arrangements for fundraising, information, membership, etc.
- a new, and primarily self-resourcing, framework for identifying and developing projects.

### Cooperation with Allavida

Our agreement with Allavida, which runs for an initial six months up to 31 March 2005, provides for

- coordination of and support of work on membership, information, Newsletter, Annual Conference and fundraising, for which we hope voluntary groups will take the main practical responsibility
- financial transactions and accounting, which Allavida will take over as it launches its own new financial system during 2005
- the secretariat for Trustees' meetings and further development of volunteer resources
- new procedures and standards for projects developed and/or undertaken under BEARR's auspices.

Richard Cunningham, who has experience of working with Russia, now acts as lead coordinator within Allavida for its work on behalf of BEARR.

We chose to cooperate more closely with Allavida because of our positive experience as their tenant and the excellent working relationships which had developed from this, because of Allavida's responsiveness to BEARR's specified requirements, and because of the prospects for operational synergy. Allavida's emphasis is on the institutional development of civil society, and it is interested to explore renewed activity in Russia.

### Volunteers and outsourcing

BEARR has been fortunate in attracting both energetic volunteers, often with a personal commitment to Russia, and active trustees, willing

to take the lead on particular tasks. Various informal groupings of trustees and volunteers have been essential to most of BEARR's non-project activities, notably the Newsletter, Annual Conference, and fundraising events. Alongside their efforts, we have sometimes bought in specific services such as catering or desktop publishing.

This approach has worked well for BEARR, and we need to build on and extend our practice. For example, we have had offers from BEARR supporters to run our membership system and to set up a better website. We are exploring this potential.

Recently we contracted Noah Birksted-Breen, former Programme Officer, to coordinate the organisation of the 2004 Annual Conference. Natasha Sturgeon has generously maintained BEARR's 'desk' at Allavida one day a week as a volunteer, and we have now been able to offer her a continuing contract.

With access to unrestricted funds limited for the foreseeable future, BEARR will depend on this combination of lean organisation, focused outsourcing, and generous voluntary support.



Richard Cunningham,  
BEARR Coordinator at Allavida

### A new approach to projects

What we aim to do in relation to projects is in one sense a radical step; in another, it too derives from, and seeks to extend, past practice. Not only has project funding become scarcer, but securing it is now more competitive, indeed speculative. Success rates and overhead recovery are too low. The hard truth is that BEARR can no longer fund regularly from its own resources the process of finding, developing, and submitting projects.

Instead, we want to promote networks of British experts and organisations able to develop and implement, or contribute to, projects under BEARR's auspices. With Allavida, we have begun work on a framework that will set out standards and

*continues page 4*

The BEARR Trust endeavours to include as wide a debate as possible in the Newsletter to capture the diversity of NGO work in Russia and its neighbours, and a broad range of opinions. BEARR cannot, however, be held responsible for the views expressed by authors in their articles.

# Introducing Allavida, BEARR's new partner

Since June 2002, Allavida and The BEARR Trust have shared offices in Vauxhall, London. When The BEARR Trust came to us and indicated that they were rethinking what they do and how they do it, we were naturally interested – having ourselves made a successful transition from Charity Know How (CKH) to Allavida in 2001.

Allavida is now providing a range of support services to The BEARR Trust, including exploring with them how they might operate in the future in their target region – Russia and the new Republics.

## Past efforts

This is by no means Allavida's first foray into that region. At CKH, the small grants programme covered all countries of the FSU. In addition, between 1999 and 2001, we ran a programme providing training, consultancy and small grants to small NGOs in Archangelsk in partnership with the Russian NGO Garant, and support to the Togliatti Children's Fund with additional support from our partner CAF Russia. The work we are now doing with The BEARR Trust also enables Allavida to re-examine its relations with Russia in particular and explore future possibilities for work there itself.

## Developing skills and knowledge in the Kyrgyz Republic

In April 2004, Allavida also began more in-depth work in the Kyrgyz Republic. With support from DfID's Civil Society Challenge Fund, Allavida is working with our Kyrgyz partner, Center InterBilim, to equip small, predominantly rural Kyrgyz community groups and local village authorities (*aiyl okmotu*) with the skills and knowledge they need to develop the socio-economic status of their communities. Over the course of two year-long cycles, we will select 20 communities from two raions in Chui oblast and, in the second cycle, 20 communities from Osh oblast.

**Jon Edwards**  
Allavida



Retreat Day for the child support project team in the mountains near Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan

Photo: Jon Edwards

The programme comprises a number of elements, but at the core are two 4-module training programmes – one designed for the community groups, the other for the *aiyl okmotu*. The modules are based on Allavida's existing training materials from South East Europe and from Russia, but these have been pulled apart – and rebuilt – by Center InterBilim and the local training team we have appointed. The training is highly practical in nature and this is supported through the provision of small grants to enable groups to put learning into practice. Regular consulting visits from the local trainers further assist the learning process.

The programme emphasises the importance of using existing local assets – including skills and energy – and working with local groups and authorities to develop these. The small grants – up to £700 – will be matched by local contributions.

Ultimately, the programme will provide up to 40 practical examples of how decentralised decision-making in the Kyrgyz Republic can work in practice. Legislation for this – delegating certain

## INTRODUCING ALLAVIDA

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decisions to the level of the *aiyl okmotu* – was passed in 2002, but there are few examples of this happening in reality, and no real historical culture to build on. This programme will work to build mutually beneficial partnerships between *aiyl okmotu* and local

community groups, identifying shared objectives and harnessing the resources of each, and the wider community, to work towards achieving common goals.

Through the programme, we seek to influence the way in which decentralised decision-making works in practice – and are therefore liaising closely with the authorities at raion and oblast level. We also seek to influence the ways in which other development agencies work, demonstrating how local communities and local people can be active players in development and not passive recipients of aid programmes.



Community group members discuss their project ideas

Photo: Jon Edwards

## A new BEARR (cont. from p2)

procedures and outline what BEARR can offer. Here there should be scope to bring together Allavida's institutional expertise with BEARR's health and social sector experience. A critical element of the proposed framework will be a fee arrangement that contributes to BEARR's overheads and, perhaps, in time allows us again to fund some project development directly.

We are looking at how better to identify and target demand by Russian NGOs for British expertise, and to market ourselves to potential Russian partners. For it is with them that the responsibility increasingly lies for putting forward proposals to donors.

### Turning concept into reality

It helps that we are not completely reinventing BEARR, but rather adapting it to changed circumstances. We can also build on existing practice and recent experience of innovation. But, especially where project work is concerned, we may need to think of ourselves less as a charity and more along the lines of an informal non-profit partnership. That is the key to making BEARR

a more robust and sustainable partner, both for Russian NGOs and for those in the UK committed to helping them.

## Thank you to Daryl Hardman

The BEARR Trustees would like to express their warmest thanks to Daryl Hardman, who recently retired as Director of BEARR. She was an energetic and committed Director, and played a major role in all the discussions leading to the Trust's revamp.

Readers may have heard that Daryl was subsequently seriously ill. We are delighted to say that she is expected to make a full recovery over a few months and we wish her all the best for the future.

Daryl was elected a Trustee of BEARR in early 2005, and the Trustees greatly look forward to her continued close involvement with the Trust.



# Promoting Change: BEARR's annual conference

by Ann Lewis, BEARR Trustee

The BEARR Trust's annual conference on 19 November 2004 took as its theme: 'Successes and failures in promoting change'. Nearly 100 participants met to hear about the changing background to the work of NGOs in Russia and the region, and to exchange experiences. They particularly appreciated the chance to learn about failures as well as successes, as the lessons are even starker.

Opening the conference, **Michael McCulloch**, Chairman of The BEARR Trust, briefly painted in the recent background in Russia: economic success but with worrying socio-political developments, including an increasing centralisation of power. The funding scene in the UK was also deteriorating, with DFID virtually pulling out of Russia, relevant programmes being halted, and a new strategy for Central Asia and the Caucasus devoting little attention to civil society or the role of UK NGOs. How should we react in this environment? Would funding go mainly to Russian NGOs in future, with a changing role for UK partners?

## NGOs and human rights

**Mary McAuley**, former Director of the Ford Foundation in Moscow and a distinguished academic, in a keynote address on 'Human Rights and NGOs: Getting it Right in Russia', spoke first about the NGO environment. There were now up to 200,000 NGOs across Russia, mostly dealing with social issues, and mostly very tiny. None had substantial staff, organisation or funding. They faced a crippling tax regime and debilitating bureaucracy. But Russians often managed to get over or around these obstacles with great ingenuity. Western funding was important in the field of human rights, but the government was suspicious of Western links. NGOs dealing with human rights and the environment encountered particular difficulties.

Dr McAuley noted that the Russian authorities wanted to control and organise NGOs. Recently a Civil Chamber of NGOs had been set up to advise government, but the value of this remained to be seen. Some NGOs had been reluctant to participate. At the



Oleg Zykov and Mary McAuley, keynote speakers at the November 2004 BEARR Conference

same time media rhetoric had become more strident and ominous, with NGOs accused of acting as 'a fifth column in a country under siege' and as 'internal enemies'. Repressive measures had been taken against outspoken academics. But Russia's leaders also wanted to preserve good relations with the West, and to this end made a semblance of cooperating with the human rights community. The UN, Council of Europe and OSCE provided valuable forums for NGO views.

Dr McAuley said that in practice many Russian NGOs did manage to cooperate with Western partners without interference, and were able to carry on their activities especially in the social area. But their

## ANNUAL CONFERENCE

situation could become dangerous. She urged UK NGOs to discuss all this with their Russian partners and encourage them to engage in civil action to defend political rights in Russia; and themselves to keep the issues in front of the British government.

### Responding with new strategies ...

The second keynote speaker, **Oleg Zykov**, Director of the NGO No to Alcoholism and Drugs (NAN), presented a slightly less pessimistic view of the background to his own work in Russia, and the useful role that UK partners could play. (Oleg Zykov's contribution will appear in a future issue of this newsletter.)

**Robert van Voren**, General Secretary of the Geneva Initiative on Psychiatry (GIP) was unable to attend the conference but his presentation 'New Funding, New Approaches' was read by a GIP Trustee, **Jane Savage**. This noted that GIP was suffering from: a severe decline in donor funding as Russia and the region became more prosperous and less prominent politically, and foundations less well-endowed; a lack of interest in mental health issues in new EU member states and a lack of competence in Brussels; and the lack of appeal, in PR terms, of mental health sufferers. GIP had adopted a new strategy of coupling mental health issues with others that attracted more attention, e.g. AIDS or forensic psychiatry. As for funding, GIP was concentrating on large-scale projects run in cooperation with local authorities, and on projects co-funded with the Dutch government. (An article by Robert van Voren on GIP's new federal structure can be found on page 8.)

### ... and overcoming setbacks ...

The conference went on to hear a detailed case study of a project in Pervouralsk which demonstrated many of the hazards for NGOs. The project, which involved The BEARR Trust and the local NGO Uspekh, aimed to improve mental health support in Pervouralsk. **Donald Ridley** of the University of East London, adviser to the project, outlined the problems the project faced: hostility from the local Psychiatric Service, departure of initially supportive local employers and their replacement by managers with no interest, departure of the two key staff of Uspekh, changes at The BEARR Trust, and prejudice in Pervouralsk against Georgian specialists brought in to help. The project, faced with impending disaster, was however rescued by the exceptionally focused and determined new Director of Uspekh.

**Svetlana Ryaposova**, the new Director, told the

conference how she had turned the project round, widening its scope and targets, bringing in new and experienced Russian advisers, and working with new groups, including teachers. She found employers would become interested when they saw benefits (profits) flowing from the project's activities. Even the local Psychiatric Service eventually became supportive. The project lasted two years and suffered many vicissitudes, but will have a lasting effect. As a parting shot, Svetlana explained one of her successful ploys: to quote Putin at any local officials who are being difficult. They can scarcely object to anything apparently endorsed by the President! (A broader account of the Pervouralsk project by BEARR's former Director **Daryl Hardman** can be found on page 12.)

### ... in a changing environment

The afternoon session began with a report by **Jan Vorisek**, Manager of GIP Georgia, on the changing environment for NGOs since the new regime took over in Georgia.

After reviewing developments over the year, his conclusion was that the political situation had improved and first steps had been taken to improve the economy, but there had been no visible improvement in the field of health and social welfare. What was needed was for the authorities to turn from rhetoric to action, switch their attention from external to internal and from political to socio-economic issues, attract further investment and observe human rights.

Jan Vorisek agreed with a questioner that a few NGOs had been co-opted by the regime, but thought that they were now stepping back. Protests about new legislation, especially on human rights, had been led by NGOs, who were becoming more vocal and critical. (Jan Vorisek's article on page 14 gives a fuller account of the situation in Georgia and GIP's work there.)

The conference then divided into three break-away sessions: on Children and Disability, Human Rights, and HIV/AIDS. The first raised a number of important issues, which are discussed more fully in the article by **Joanna Rogers** and **Nicola Ramsden** on page 10.

### Human rights an enduring issue

Introducing the break-away session on Human Rights, **Margaret Collier** of Amnesty International noted that Russia is not a country that one associates with human rights. Russian society is notoriously violent, showing a lack of respect for individuals. Domestic violence is widespread, yet

dismissed by the government. Abusive behaviour towards women is also prevalent in the army, in prison and the police.

In recent years, Amnesty International has approached the Russian authorities and raised awareness that violence against women is a human rights issue. In 2002, the 'Justice for all in Russia' campaign was launched in Moscow, and Amnesty's current global campaign is 'Stop violence against women'. In recent years, the prevention of domestic violence has become a priority for many international and Russian organisations. **Mary Murphy**, the rapporteur for the group, underlined some of the key elements involved in achieving this: support for women's organisations based in Russia; promoting publicity within the target countries; and using inter-governmental bodies to urge ratification of the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women.

In the HIV/AIDS group, **Frank Greaves** reported on Tearfund's Russia HIV/AIDS Programme. Its mission in Russia is to empower church organisations working with HIV and to train church leaders to play an active role in the HIV campaign. The church itself is not immune to discrimination, the prevailing view within the church being that HIV results from 'criminal activity'. While the Russian Orthodox Church has the most developed HIV programme, Tearfund also works with the Pentecostal, Charismatic and Baptist confessions (all of whose leaders meet every six months with President Putin). Tearfund is dedicated to working with drug rehabilitation centres, commercial sex workers (prostitutes), and harm reduction programmes, assisting ex-prisoners and training community members like babushkas in delivering care for people with HIV.

Frank Greaves pointed out that in Russia 70 per cent of people with HIV are drug addicts, a 24-year-old male being typical. Although the HIV problem is very serious, it is not a policy priority for the government because not very many people are dying at the moment. But as other speakers pointed out, many deaths can be attributed to HIV/AIDS even if they are not officially recognised as such.

The group also discussed what approaches worked and what did not, and how NGOs could best work with the existing community-based infrastructure. It was agreed that HIV/AIDS programmes were not very attractive for fundraising compared with projects involving children or human rights abuses. Tearfund had found it useful to promote projects

involving other issues combined with HIV/AIDS. A representative from CAFOD noted that in Serbia the only successful method had been to offer confidential counselling and physiological support to students with HIV, who could then serve as an effective channel for support to other young people suffering from HIV.

### Take your lead from local partners

In summing up a lively day's debate, Michael McCulloch noted the immense complexity of the NGO scene, with a great proliferation of NGOs at local and sectoral level. It was not easy for British NGOs to find a niche where they could best add value. It was important to consult Russian partners and organisations, and to identify gaps where there was some hope of getting finance. Funding decisions were going overseas, to local organisations. It was important that Russian and other local organisations take the lead in identifying where they wanted Western expertise. He posed (and offered answers to) three key questions for British NGOs:

- Was the situation better or worse now for NGOs in Russia? There were conflicting tendencies. It was important to monitor developments carefully. For example, would the Civil Council be an open forum or a means of exerting control?
- Do Russian NGOs still seek external cooperation? Yes, though their requests are different. They seek a more professional, more targeted contribution.
- Must we change the way we operate? Yes, especially by responding to partner initiatives.

Michael McCulloch concluded that Russian (and other) NGOs were having a significant impact on the evolution of society and politics. A combination of activity on the ground and advocacy could lead to changes in practice. There was an underlying vitality in Russian NGOs, whatever doubts there might be at the Federal level.

## KINO KINO!

Kino Kino! is a film club showing films from the former Soviet Union. Most screenings take place at Ciné Lumière in South Kensington. The next event which Kino Kino! is organising is a retrospective of films by Armenian director Sergei Parajanov in May. To join the Kino Kino! mailing list, send your name, email address and/or postal address to [vitaly@kinokino.co.uk](mailto:vitaly@kinokino.co.uk). Or, for more information, visit [www.kinokino.co.uk](http://www.kinokino.co.uk) or phone 020 8881 9463.

REFORMING MENTAL HEALTH PROVISION IN RUSSIA

# A broader perspective for the Geneva Initiative on Psychiatry

by Robert van Voren,  
General Secretary, GIP

Throughout the 1990s, the Geneva Initiative on Psychiatry (GIP) ran projects in East and Central Europe from its head office in Hilversum, Netherlands. Since the turn of the century it has responded to the altered funding principles of its main donors by developing a federal structure. Here, Robert van Voren, GIP's General Secretary, outlines the thinking behind this restructuring and emphasises the continuing need for mental health provision in Russia.

## GIP – 25 years on

In just a few months the Geneva Initiative on Psychiatry (GIP) will celebrate its twenty-fifth anniversary. Over the past quarter of a century our field of operation has changed completely. Starting as a human rights organisation combatting the political abuse of psychiatry and working in countries run by totalitarian communist regimes, we are now active in a very diverse part of the world, covering almost thirty countries ranging from democratic to totalitarian, and with mental health services undergoing enormous change.

The scope of the organisation has also changed greatly. From a small group of human rights activists who joined forces to compel the World Psychiatric Association to expel the Soviet member association because of the political abuse of psychiatry, it has developed into an international foundation

considered to be the leading organisation in mental health care development in Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.

## Establishing regional centres

Over the past five years GIP has undergone an important reorganisation, focusing on setting up regional centres closer to the areas of activity. These new regional centres are run by local staff and governed by regional boards. This regionalisation process has led to the opening of offices in Vilnius, Sofia and Tbilisi.

At the same time the composition of the GIP management board in Hilversum has changed. Originally made up mainly of psychiatrists and laypersons, it now comprises representatives of all stakeholders in mental health care, including

mental health professionals, relatives and users. The same broad perspective is reflected in the newly established regional boards. The three regional centres and the office in Hilversum will become a federation in 2005, and the nature of the relationship between the offices will be laid down in a federation agreement to be signed at a special ceremony in The Hague on March 4, 2005. Reorganisation without any broader purpose, however, would be a waste of time and energy. What, therefore, do we hope to achieve?

## Aims and achievements

It is clear that Central and Eastern Europe and the Newly Independent States, monolithic under their communist



Open Day at Vasaros Psychiatric Hospital in Vilnius. GIP's office in Vilnius manages child psychiatry projects throughout the region.

Photo: courtesy GIP Vilnius

## KONEVETS IN OXFORD

totalitarian regimes, are now becoming increasingly diverse and following very different paces of development.

While some of the Central European countries can boast mental health care almost as good as in some EU countries, in others leftovers from the 'old days' are clearly visible, particularly in the ossified field of psychiatry. Cage beds, huge hostels for the chronically ill with no differentiation, all-too-ready psychiatrisation of cases, 'economic abuse' by buying handy diagnoses to get rid of bothersome relatives – all this we can still see not so far from London, Amsterdam or Paris.

Having offices on the spot, with local staff and consultants from the region, makes an organisation much more effective. Those in favour of change know we are nearby, easily accessible and willing to support their reform activities in every way possible. And those who still look nostalgically to the past

and cling to old power structures as they crumble beneath their feet clearly feel that GIP is there to stay and that change is inevitable. Our success in the region over the past five years has been remarkable when compared with the achievements of previous years, and this can only partly be ascribed to the fact that earlier investments are now starting to bear fruit.

### Russian psychiatry reverting to type?

Yet at the same time there are areas of great concern. One of them, and perhaps the most important, is Russia, the home of 'sluggish schizophrenia', the diagnosis so often used against dissidents, where 'relics of the past' continue to flourish.

After several years of silence and holding their breath, the leaders of the old regime in psychiatry have, step by step, resumed their positions. In most parts of the Russian Federation, psychiatry is as untouched as if

the Communist regime had never fallen.

Only in certain areas, notably Tomsk, Kaliningrad Oblast, and St Petersburg have significant successes been recorded. Even these are now threatened by President Putin's 'FSB-isation' of society. Although initially his drive against corruption was welcomed, most informed observers now agree that he has cleverly staged a phased coup-d'état and that the country is now effectively ruled by his colleagues from the former KGB. Our fear is that this will further hamper mental health reform and could even force GIP to resume its old trade: combatting the political abuse of psychiatry in a semi-totalitarian or authoritarian Russian state.

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## Konevets in Oxford

On 15 October last year, the Konevets Vocal Quartet took time out from a UK national tour to perform at a concert in aid of The BEARR Trust. Konevets are well known to many friends of BEARR from their past performances in the UK, but this was the first occasion that they had performed in Oxford. The venue, the lovely chapel of Pembroke College, which dates from the early 18th century, proved to be ideal.

In the first half of the concert the Quartet sang Russian sacred music while the second half featured Russian national and folk songs. After the performance, the Quartet joined the audience – Friends of BEARR, the Russian community and other interested parties in Oxford, and members of Pembroke College – at a drinks reception in the very pleasant surroundings of the College Senior Common Room.



Pembroke Chapel Quad

Photo: courtesy Pembroke College

Thanks to the generosity of those attending, and people who sent donations, well in excess of £500 was raised to support The BEARR Trust.

The BEARR Trust is most grateful to John Church, BEARR Trustee and Bursar of Pembroke College, for organising this excellent concert and to the Master and Fellows of Pembroke College for hosting it.

**CHILDREN AND DISABILITY IN RUSSIA**

# Children and disability in Russia: making integration a reality?

**U**K-based organisations including Downside Up in Moscow and the Early Intervention Institute in St Petersburg have pioneered innovative services for disabled children in Russia. These particular initiatives have led to fewer children with Down's Syndrome being abandoned. It is also encouraging to see a decline in the inappropriate labelling of children as 'oligophrenic', 'idiot' or 'imbecile', and to recognise that there is less institutionalising of disabled children than is often assumed. Only 8 per cent of

**by Joanna Rogers, Russia Director, Everychild, and Nicola Ramsden, Trustee, BEARR Trust**

children classified as disabled are living in institutional care, and these are the most vulnerable ones, those living with multiple disabilities and genetic conditions such as Down's Syndrome.

## Remaining challenges

On the other hand, well-equipped rehabilitation centres opened by local authorities in Russia are not always being used. Is it possible that these centres do not meet real needs and that they ghettoise rather than integrate children with special needs? Assessment and diagnosis continue to be arbitrary, so that it is difficult to respond to needs and to allocate resources appropriately – in one district of

St Petersburg, 400 out of 4,000 registered disabled children were classified as 'severely disabled', and yet only 150 of them have multiple disabilities in the commonly understood sense. A further barrier to integration is that services themselves are often not integrated, reflecting strong institutional divisions between the health and education sectors, and a tendency in Russia for each discipline to have a formal and academic approach. It is noticeable that the most successful projects are those that promote a multi-disciplinary, inter-sectoral approach, by bringing together people who have not talked before. Several organisations, including The

### – SOURCES OF INFORMATION AND DIRECTORIES –

The Agency for Social Information  
Web: [www.asi.org.ru](http://www.asi.org.ru)

All-Russian Union of Non-Governmental Organizations 'Civil Society – for Russia's Children'

Tel: 095 25163-08

095 25163-12

095 25163-26

Email: [pamfilova@comintern.ru](mailto:pamfilova@comintern.ru)

NGO/UNICEF Regional Network for Children in CEE/CIS and Baltic States

Bdul. Decebal Nr. 4

Bl. S11, Sc. 1, Et. 3, Ap. 9

741261 Bucharest, Sector 3

ROMANIA

Tel/Fax: +40-21-320.80.65

Tel: +40-21-326.84.58

Email: [rnc@dial.kappa.ro](mailto:rnc@dial.kappa.ro)

Child Rights Information Network

Web: [www.crin.org](http://www.crin.org)



Maya Konstantinova (11, right) and Seryozha Panfilov (12) at a speech therapy lesson in North St Petersburg, Russia

Photo: EveryChild/David Levene

BEARR Trust, publish directories or perform a coordinating role to promote good inter-disciplinary working; some of these are listed in the box opposite.

### Rethinking our attitudes to disabled children

We risk concentrating too much on children's disabilities, and too little on the fact that they are children. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child deals with 'the disabled child' in article 23, but we should also focus on the

fundamental articles, such as article 3, and consider whether our projects meet children's best interests in a more general sense. We should also, most importantly, recognise that children with disabilities do not always need the able-bodied to speak for them; they have their own voice.

### Rethinking our attitudes to working with the State

The contracting out of social services is being widely discussed

and prepared at Federal level, and we need to examine our own attitudes to NGOs that procure government money. A relationship with local authorities often reflects a healthy degree of pragmatism, and does not have to imply co-option or corruption. We need to support our partners in building healthy, independent relationships with their funders, and to have the confidence to advocate change at the same time as bidding for state contracts or grants.

# Russian NGOs today

by Elena Topoleva, Director of the Agency for Social Information (ASI)

The first two or three years after perestroika saw a rapid growth in non-commercial non-governmental organisations in Russia. Independent of government, these social groups worked in a wide variety of areas. Thanks to the support of foreign donors, particularly British, these young organisations were quickly able to master management and fundraising skills and familiarise themselves with advanced Western technologies, adapting these successfully to Russian conditions.

A few years later, these new organisations began actively to co-operate with each other. They published thematic newspapers and journals, kept lists of correspondents and regularly assembled for seminars and conferences. Their undoubted achievements can be attributed to the enormous efforts they put into negotiating with the state, most importantly at regional and municipal levels. Where they achieved little success, however, was in winning public trust and getting

citizens involved in their activities.

The position of Russian NGOs has changed considerably in the last two to three years. The tax situation has noticeably worsened. In most cases, grants from Russian and foreign funds or government programmes are not recognised as such in Russian law, and are therefore subject to taxation as income from commercial activities. To minimise this tax burden, NGOs have to employ all kinds of devices, re-register or obtain different certificates.

The policies of Western private funds and governmental programmes working in Russia have changed noticeably. Support for civil society has practically vanished from their priorities. George Soros' Open Society Institute, which provided vital grants to thousands of organisations, ended its activities in 2003; likewise, the Civil Society programme of the Ford Foundation has come to an



end. And the UK has reduced the budget for its programmes in Russia. A lack of financial resources has forced many NGOs to close while others are struggling to maintain their activities, as they have lost Western aid and not been able to obtain the support of Russian citizens.

Russian government support has not declined, but neither has it increased. And this type of support (competing for municipal grants, social municipal orders, etc.) does not operate in all regions of

*continues page 13*

# Pervouralsk: a lesson in flexibility

by Daryl Hardman,  
Former Director of The BEARR Trust

As soon as it is launched, a social and healthcare project in Russia takes on a life that is dictated in part by its original conception and in part by the environment and people around it. A wonderfully clear example of this is The BEARR Trust's 'Mental Health in the Workplace' project in the Urals city of Pervouralsk.

The environment of Pervouralsk is the city's overriding factor. In a country in which the mass of Soviet urban architecture is ugly, built to accommodate industrial production rather than people, Pervouralsk is a smoke-stack complex with workers' living blocks and kindergartens arranged in the spaces around



Session run by the Uspekhn Centre at a local school

and between factories. This is not the sort of inhuman grandeur experienced by small mankind in Moscow, dwarfed by marble and granite Stalinist palaces; this is inhumanity caused by the simple fact that humans are afterthoughts, the grist that turns the mills that once placed Pervouralsk's pipeline manufacturers among the mightiest in the oil-rich USSR

Liberalisation brought little positive change to Pervouralsk doors. One novelty has arrived: unemployment is growing as the industrial giants lose out to competitors advancing on their once tied customer base. In the new private sector, skilled factory engineers work as traders, drive taxis or hire themselves out as builders and decorators to the handful of newly rich.

It is not surprising that alcoholism is rife, nor that this is being overtaken by its modern equivalent, drug

addiction, among Pervouralsk's disenchanted youth. Those at work are often trapped in prospectless jobs, with wages paid months in arrears. Those in education dream of places where modern ideas and qualifications are on offer. This is the situation in which Pervouralsk's NGO development centre, Uspekhn, was conceived.

'Uspekhn' means 'success'. An HSCP grant enabled The BEARR Trust to run a series of programmes at Uspekhn on the hitherto undiscussed issue of mental health. We had envisaged working together with the State Psychiatric Service at oblast and city level. Sadly, the initial apparent interest of the Soviet-era old guard at the top of this institution soon turned into open non-cooperation as we introduced the idea that the concept of mental health is much more useful than that of mental illness, and went even further by suggesting that people with psychosis are capable of living quite normal lives most of the time. This runs counter to received wisdom in a system where diagnoses condemn people to a lifetime of institutionalisation or enforced unemployability.

Frustrated, we sought new allies and found them in schools, in younger middle management, in the new Job Centre, and among teachers, social workers and parents of children with learning difficulties for whom the hammer of the State Psychiatric Service creates more problems than it solves. Uspekhn's programme changed its name to 'Psychological Well-being in the Workplace' and took on a new look. Its seminars were soon full to bursting, even though participants sometimes had to take annual leave in order to attend.

The programmes examined methods for conceptualising, planning and implementing practical frameworks for organisations in which people with mental health problems can be supported and their potential achieved. These frameworks bring equal benefit to the organisations themselves. Undoubtedly the most popular programmes were those for the schools' groups, followed by those for social workers and then

## MENTAL HEALTH IN THE WORKPLACE

managers. Teachers were immediately able to adapt the material to their own requirements, and such was their enthusiasm that, before long, a group of their older pupils were asking to be included in the programme.

Local factory managers also became involved, including those at Pervouralsk's largest pipe producer, Novotrubny zavod. Ironically enough, the refusal of the State Psychiatric Service to cooperate had forced the project to be a success in exactly the area we had ultimately hoped for: it turned into a movement for bottom-up change rather than Soviet-model diktat from the top down.

The challenge for the future, as Uspekhn Director Svetlana Ryaposova sees it, is to take the bottom-up message to other provincial towns and cities in Russia. The might of Russia is built on its provincial industrial cities where the majority of the population live. The central message is one of a change in attitude towards people, no longer cogs in the production machine, but human beings. This change in attitude has important ramifications for the psychological well-being of the nation as a whole, as well as that of individuals.

**With thanks to project consultants Donald Ridley and Eva Vikentjeva whose ideas contributed to this article.**



Young people at the Uspekhn Centre in Pervouralsk

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## Russian NGOs today continued from page 11

Russia. On the whole, the federal institutions make little attempt to co-operate with the NGO sector. Moreover, we have seen government organisations and tax agencies pursuing NGOs involved in the protection of rights.

Their situation has been considerably complicated since President Putin's address to the Federal Assembly, in which he spoke about social organisations that received support from 'influential foreign funds', that were pursuing someone else's 'commercial interests' and could not dare to 'bite the hand that fed them'. It is apparent that the message was directed at influential rights protection organisations, which actively and fearlessly came out in support of Yukos – a model of social responsibility and transparency – and its ex-

president Mikhail Khodorkovsky. This move was immediately echoed by federal and municipal bureaucrats, who attempted to separate the NGOs into 'their own' and 'others' and inflict maximum damage on the latter group.

One of the few positive signs recently has been the increasing awareness of the social role of business. Co-operation between socially responsible companies and NGOs is developing well at both the federal and regional level, and is expressed in different ways. Large expert NGOs, such as CAF, ASI, Institute of City Economics, Povolzhie Association, The Siberian Centre of Support for Social Initiatives and The Archangelsk Centre Garant, are attracted by the opportunities offered by business to develop, plan, implement and evaluate effective

social programmes directed at local society and to audit and prepare their social reports. Socially directed NGOs receive support from companies through grant competitions conducted by expert organisations using the funds of business; through re-established private Russian funds; and through local community foundations.

Business in Russia has only just started to consider the importance of supporting and co-operating with civil organisations. Both sides will have a long and difficult path ahead if they are to become real social partners. But this seems to be the only opportunity for the non-commercial sector to survive in the present unfavourable conditions.

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# Grasping the nettle of reform in Georgia

by Jan Vorisek  
Manager, GIP, Georgia

In November 2003, as a result of rigged presidential elections, a popular uprising took place that eventually brought to power a new president, Michael Saakashvili. This dramatic change in the political landscape of Georgia was later named the 'Rose Revolution' after its main characteristic – peaceful demonstrations with flowers.

The new leadership promised a radical departure from the past: a fight against corruption, ineffective public services, deepening poverty and a divided country. Popular expectations were high.

Now, one year later, a preliminary balance-sheet can be drawn up. A number of important and positive changes have already taken place. Politically, Georgia abandoned the balancing act of former President Shevardnadze in favour of a clear pro-Western stance. In addition, emphasis was put on restoring Georgian territorial integrity by trying to bring the separatist regions of Adjara, South Ossetia and Abkhazia under Georgia's political influence. Adjara was indeed integrated through a similar uprising to that in Tbilisi. However, South Ossetia and Abkhazia resisted, and so far no visible progress has been made.

A strong drive was launched against corruption within the government services, especially the police and customs, the most corrupt parts of the system. The police force was completely overhauled and more than half of the officers dismissed. Many corrupt political leaders of the previous era were jailed and their property confiscated.

In the economy, efforts were made to improve the investment climate and attract new business, including imposition of a new tax code from 1 January 2005. It is hoped that this and the anti-corruption measures will attract investors and stimulate economic growth, which is currently close to zero.

In the social sphere, a number of positive changes were made such as pension reform and payment of unpaid pensions to the elderly. The education system is expected to improve after new legislation on secondary and higher education, intended to overhaul completely the old system which bred corruption and very poor educational standards.

In health care, key ministry personnel were replaced, and further staff changes made after a few months. The government expressed its commitment

to primary health care and further reform of the health system.

All this legislative and systemic change, together with the drive for territorial integrity and against corruption, has led to increased satisfaction among the population and general approval of even sometimes drastic measures such as the dismissal of 35,000 police. One year on, people feel that corruption is less pervasive and organised crime is coming under control.

Nevertheless, there is disappointment as well. Some expectations were unrealistic,



Photo: Jan Vorisek

GIP-Tbilisi is assisting the Batumi orphanage to integrate children into regular pre-schools and schools

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others were not met for a variety of reasons: the appointment of young and inexperienced people to top positions, the weakness for rhetoric rather than action, and rushed decision-making, to name but a few.

Analysing the situation in greater depth, it becomes clear that, while at the political level positive changes have taken place and the situation really has improved, some issues have not been tackled, such as reform of the Soviet-style judicial system. As a result, human rights, especially of detainees, are not always strictly observed and abuse still exists. This issue has been raised a number of times by respected NGOs, at the moment the only true opposition as the government party holds over 90 per cent of the seats in parliament. Unfortunately, the leadership does not always take complaints seriously enough.

Similarly, little progress is discernible within the social sector, especially in health care. Staff changes at the Ministry of Health, Labour and Social Affairs are yet to produce results. The

payment of pensions seems to be the only visible achievement. Advanced education for health specialists was stopped to prevent further corruption, but not replaced by any other post-graduate training. The health insurance system is still not functioning, nor are the health care institutions. As a result, access to health services, even at the basic level, remains very limited and costly.

One can argue that actions in the political and economic areas are more readily visible, while changes in education and health take time. Within the education system, some important and positive system changes have been made, but no such changes have been attempted in the health sector, and the current health care system is barely functioning.

In summary, it is undeniable that much has been achieved in Georgia in a very short time, thanks to committed leadership and bold actions. Positive changes are already palpable although in some sectors progress is slow. This is hardly surprising in view of the

sorry state Georgia was in before November 2004. So, what should the next steps be? While political issues will probably continue to dominate the government agenda, more emphasis on economic and social issues would be very welcome. In addition, a more pro-active stance by some governmental officials could speed the development process and democratisation. Finally, it is to be hoped that the leaders and their followers will take greater account of the concerns of leading NGOs in such fields as human rights. Since, unlike in the past, there is a good relationship between the new government and NGOs, it is probably only a matter of time before closer cooperation develops.

**FUNDING DEADLINES****DEPARTMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (DFID):****CIVIL SOCIETY CHALLENGE FUND (CSCF)**

As a result of the consultation process on the Challenge Fund reported in the last edition, the criteria of the Fund have changed to some extent. The deadline for the submission of concept notes for projects intended to begin after 1 April 2006 is 30 June 2005. The deadline for submission of subsequent full proposals is 31 July 2005. Decisions will be made in early March 2006.

Further information may be obtained from the Deputy Programme Manager, Steve Nally, on +44 (0) 1355 843199; by email from the DFID enquiry point, enquiry@dfid.gov.uk;

or direct from the DFID website, [www.dfid.gov.uk/funding/civilsocietycfinfo.asp](http://www.dfid.gov.uk/funding/civilsocietycfinfo.asp), from where guidelines and deadlines may be downloaded.

**WESTMINSTER FOUNDATION FOR DEMOCRACY**

The Foundation is reviewing the way it works, and the goals and general strategy which emerge from this process will be posted on its website.

Meanwhile, its next funding deadlines are

Deadlines for applications	Board meetings
15 March 2005	17 May 2005
10 May 2005	12 July 2005
16 August 2005	18 October 2005

Full details are available on its website: [www.wfd.org](http://www.wfd.org)

## Where are they now? a quick round-up of some of BEARR's old, and not-so-old, faces

**Noah Birksted-Breen**, completed his MA at the Central School of Speech and Drama and then directed a play by Dennis Kelly at the Young Vic Studio. He translates new Russian-language plays for the Royal Court and continues to work freelance for BEARR and other international NGOs.

**Benjamin Carey** now runs Dunira, an independent consultancy working on sustainable development strategies for emerging tourism destinations, primarily in Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

**Maria Diaz** worked for the EC for two years, first on FSU countries, then on worldwide drug projects.

She is now at the London Development Agency, working on social inclusion and creative industry projects.

**Myra Green** is now settled in Topsham and very much involved in local community affairs. She is on a committee drafting the town's Community Plan, which will set out its future priorities. She is a Trustee of EveryChild and Chair of the Overseas Programme Committee. She remains an Adviser to WaterAid's Overseas Committee and, as a BEARR Patron, helps with BEARR fundraising.

**Daryl Hardman** is resuming her freelance consultancy work (see 'our thanks' to Daryl on page 4).

**Serge Oumov** worked for the ICRC in Nagorno-Karabakh, and since then for the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SADC) where he currently deals with health issues in Eastern Europe and the CIS.

**Clare Rimmer** is currently working as a project officer at the European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE), helping to develop the capacity of NGOs assisting refugees in Russia, Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus.

**Liz Rood** works for Research Analysts at the FCO, but is currently on a 6-month temporary posting to Kiev.

**Donal Savage** worked with a small development agency involved in India before becoming an IT consultant. He now acts as a project manager for small commercial and charitable groups, training, writing, planning and organising events.

**Bill Seary** is a freelance specialist in international work with NGOs. He has managed a number of BEARR projects, mainly with Povolzhie (in Samara) and Dobraya Volya (in Ekaterinburg).

**Rachel Watson** has started the Graduate Diploma in Law at BPP Law School in London, with a view to becoming a solicitor.

*BEARR is always glad to hear and, if appropriate, pass on news of its former staff and volunteers.*

### About The BEARR Trust

**Patrons:** The Duchess of Abercorn, Vladimir Ashkenazy, Elena Bashkirova Barenboim, Lady Fall, Myra Green OBE, Professor Geoffrey Hosking, Lady Hurd, HE Sir Roderic Lyne KBE CMG, Dr Jonathan Miller CBE, Anthony Oppenheimer, Rair Simonyan, Sir Andrew Wood GCMG, Sir Norman Wooding CBE

The BEARR Trust is a British registered charity. It was formed in 1991 to act as a bridge between the welfare and health sectors of Britain and the former Soviet Union (FSU). It has four main aims:

- to collaborate with British organisations working with the voluntary, social welfare and health sectors in the FSU, particularly in order to provide information and advice;
- to be a clearing house for information about British activities in the FSU and, where appropriate, to make this information public;
- to bring British and FSU organisations together for the transfer of information, skills and material aid;
- to initiate projects that will strengthen the FSU's voluntary, social welfare and health sectors.

**Trustees:** Michael McCulloch (Chairman), John Church, Daryl Hardman, Professor Michael Holman, Marcia Levy, Ann Lewis CMG, Nicola Ramsden

**Staff:** Coordinator: Richard Cunningham; Information Officer: Natasha Sturgeon; Finance Officer: John Kidd

**Volunteers:** Lina Numan, Sara Pfaffenhoefer, Alena Ryzhikova, Dana Usbay, Anna von Bennigsen

**Editorial Board:** Ann Lewis, Michael Holman, Leila Carlyle

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Contact details may be made available to other voluntary organisations working in the former Soviet Union, unless you tick this box to indicate that this information is confidential.

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