

'Stormy Outlook?

Challenges facing health and welfare NGOs and their international links': Report of the 2014 BEARR Trust Annual Conference

BEARR Trust Small Grants Scheme 2015: call for bids

Reflections on the position of NGOs in Russia

Two updates on the position of NGOs in Ukraine:

- Odessa: Faith Hope Love
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Country profile:
Kazakhstan



Ukrainian NGOs are currently focused on humanitarian aid to people displaced by conflict (see pages 8–10)

The BEARR Trust Small Grants Scheme 2015

The BEARR Trust is pleased to announce its Small Grants Scheme for 2015 and invites applications from NGOs and other organisations. Full details are given below. The deadline is **1 March 2015**.

The fields to be covered by the scheme in 2015 are among those highlighted at the 2014 BEARR Trust Annual Conference.

Section A: For projects dealing with psychological support for people displaced by the conflict in Ukraine.

Section B: For projects to support victims of domestic violence in Central Asian countries.

The Trust may wish to support a number of initiatives through the scheme, so proposals for grants of up to £2000 are invited. Awards will be made on a matching basis, and not exceed 50% of the overall cost of a project. Applicants should present costings in pounds sterling, but grants may be paid in sterling, dollars or euros as best suits the recipient, who will bear the cost of currency conversion. Projects should normally be completed within six months of receipt of the funds. The BEARR Trust reserves the right to independent evaluation of any project funded.

What are the aims of the Scheme?

The 2015 Small Grants Scheme aims to support and encourage NGOs to:

- share experience and learning among NGOs with relevant aims
- disseminate good practice more widely
- facilitate cooperation with and/or coordination among NGOs and other organisations working with relevant groups
- improve awareness, or engage public institutions in addressing the relevant issues
- propose other, imaginative, ways of achieving the Scheme's aims.

Who can apply for the grants?

The scheme is open to applications from NGOs and other organisations active in the areas covered by the Small Grants Scheme 2015. (Section A: Ukraine, Section B: Central Asian countries).

How to apply

There is no standard application form. Please send the information outlined below in English (with a Russian translation if you wish) by email to info@bearr.org before 1 March 2015. You should put in the subject line: SGS 2015 – bid.

The application should be no more than two pages of A4. It should include:

- The name of the NGO applying for a grant, its address, phone number and email address.
- The name and position of the person dealing with the grant application.
- A brief description of the organisation, its mission and objectives.
- Brief details of any partner organisation, its mission and objectives.
- Objectives, short and long term, of the project proposed, and a brief description of the activities to be supported.
- The hoped-for outcomes and the criteria by which you will judge whether or not they have been met.
- How this work fits in with your organisation's current activities and how it meets the aims of the Scheme.
- The proposed total project budget, showing separately the amount requested from BEARR and the contributions to be made by the applicant NGO and other partners.

- Indicate on your budget: the number of people employed on the project, how many are employees of the NGO, whether any are volunteers, the number of days the project will last, daily rates of pay. The budget must relate to the project activities described above and include salaries set at local levels.

Applications of more than two pages will not be considered.

Criteria for selecting successful applications

Initial selection of applications will be done according to whether or not the application contains all the information asked for, the extent to which it furthers the aims of The BEARR Trust, and the evidence that good use will be made of the resources available.

The BEARR Trust does not give grants for equipment.

What happens after an application is received by The BEARR Trust?

The Trust will acknowledge applications as they are received. A shortlist will be drawn up for further detailed consideration. The Trust will contact applicants for any further information or clarification it needs. Applicants who are not shortlisted will be informed by the beginning of April 2015. Trustees will review shortlisted proposals at their meeting in mid-April. The Trust will announce which proposals have been successful soon thereafter.

All applicants will receive by email: an acknowledgment of the receipt of the application, followed by notification of whether or not their application has been shortlisted. Those on the shortlist will be notified by email whether they have been awarded a grant or not.

The Small Grants Scheme 2015 is funded by donations from generous individuals and companies, to whom we extend our thanks.

Stormy outlook?:

Challenges facing health and welfare NGOs and their international links

by Janet Gunn, BEARR Trustee

The BEARR Trust's Annual Conference on 14 November 2014 looked at the constraints – political, legal, bureaucratic, financial – that face NGOs across our region, and considered how they are adapting to cope with, in some of our countries, rapidly changing circumstances. To view speakers' presentations, click on their name. For speakers' biographies, [click here](#).

The conference confirmed the question in the title – concluding that non-governmental organisations in many of the countries in the region where BEARR is active are indeed facing challenging times, for many reasons. But there were also moments of optimism. The invited speakers shared their expertise on countries all around the region – Armenia, Kyrgyzstan, Azerbaijan, Russia and Ukraine, and on a thematic level covered many areas of NGO work: youth, education, health, penal reform, as well as political and legal aspects of the not-for-profit sector.

Throughout the day, a good deal of diversity across the region emerged, and the discussion often returned to political issues. While BEARR is a non-political organisation, active in health and social welfare – on the face of it non-political topics – many participants argued that everything is political, and it certainly seemed that no discussion of NGOs in the countries of the former Soviet Union can take place without political issues taking centre stage in various ways. Discussion covered recent legislation in Russia affecting NGOs, the conduct of prosecutors and the Ministry of Justice to implement the legislation, despite the fact that social welfare and health NGOs are supposedly exempt, at least from the 'foreign agent' legislation, as well as copycat legislation in the pipeline in Kyrgyzstan and elsewhere, and also the general decline of grant giving from abroad and by business.

At the same time, however, many speakers stressed the emergence of new forms of social activism, in the shape of crowdsourcing, fundraising by SMS and social media, and the development of social enterprises. Third sector activity in the health sphere was also facing challenges, in the form of new



legislation in Russia forbidding 'propaganda about non-traditional sexual relationships' and similar legislation under discussion elsewhere in the region, with the result that even where it had not been formally adopted, vulnerable groups had become more hesitant about seeking advice and medical services. One speaker had tried without success to ascertain what, in her country, was formally defined as 'traditional sex'!

There was a broad consensus that the days of western funding of NGO activity in these countries were coming to an end, while new sources of funding were developing but still not adequate to take up the slack completely. Traditional post-communist NGOs are increasingly working on behalf of or with local government to deliver services, and less inclined to use advocacy on behalf of the groups they represent in case this should result in accusations of 'political activity' and hence reprisals by the authorities. Russia was the first country in the region to adopt legislation inhibiting the activities of NGOs, while the South Caucasus health and social welfare NGOs were still able to function more or less freely. In Central Asia there were two models: in Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan there was virtually no foreign funding or involvement and almost no third sector activity, while in Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan NGOs were able to operate freely. Restrictive legislation was under discussion but had not been adopted.

Annual conference

In Ukraine, in early 2014 ex-President Yanukovich had implemented restrictive legislation but as soon as he fled the country it was repealed, and since the new president and government took office NGOs have been more active than previously, in the general debate about reforms and in drafting new legislation. The situation in Belarus and Moldova was not discussed on this occasion.

Session 1 – Overview of the Region

Armine Ishkanian, Assistant Professor in the Department of Social Policy, London School of Economics and Political Science, stressed the current degree of divergence in the region after the relative uniformity of trends in the first two decades of third sector development, from 1991-2005. Then there had been rapid growth, most of it top-down, due to an influx of foreign funding. More recently there has been a rise in grass-roots civic initiatives and social media activism initiated by a post-Soviet generation without direct experience of repression. Such groups and partnerships work collaboratively but without feeling any need to institutionalise themselves as NGOs.



Across the region the main challenges are identifying new funding sources and maintaining independence. Social enterprises are emerging but lack a legislative framework in which to operate. Tension has developed between service provision and advocacy work, particularly since governments became nervous about NGOs since the 'colour revolutions' in Georgia, Ukraine and Kyrgyzstan. The public still do not trust NGOs much, and rather than supporting specific areas of activity consistently, tend to donate spontaneously, especially for causes like sick children. NGOs now try to operate independently of donors and authorities, working with civic initiatives and informal grassroots groups below the radar. Civic initiatives try to consider the causes of social difficulties rather than just solutions. Some topics, such as domestic violence, are still not much talked about and while they attract funding, little progress has been made in changing public attitudes. Activism in this area as in the case of LGBT rights, tends to be seen as the introduction of alien values and some initiative groups have been set up to campaign against such work.

Kate Levine, a lawyer at European Human Rights Advocacy Centre (EHRAC), and formerly at the Sigrid Rausing Trust, often sees the negative side of the situation for NGOs, having been involved with a number of cases brought to the European Court of Human Rights. She highlighted the Russian Federation's foreign agents (FA) law, and other legal barriers

to entry, registration, free speech and assembly by NGOs. They are squeezing the space for NGOs, by going beyond reasonable regulation and imposing restrictions. The aim of these laws appears to be to stigmatise NGOs, particularly those which are politically active, and to demonise activism per se.

Kate described the methods used to impose the FA law regulations, such as unannounced inspections, prosecutions and forcible registration as a 'foreign agent'. Very large fines have been imposed; more than 55 warnings have been issued to NGOs and 14 have been forcibly (unilaterally) registered. Some NGOs have decided to dissolve themselves. Despite the fact that health and social welfare NGOs are supposedly exempt, the FA law has been applied in cases such as the Cystic Fibrosis Association, an HIV/AIDS foundation in Orel (both of which were issued with warnings that they may breach the FA law), and most recently the Soldiers' Mothers organisation after it reported the numbers of Russian soldiers killed in Ukraine this year. So far only one children's charity has been under pressure. There have been challenges to the application of the law, but the Constitutional Court has ruled it legitimate as it is a 'voluntary regime', on the grounds that it is subject to legal review. There are options for escaping the law, such as registering as a commercial organisation and setting up part of the NGO as such; or registering outside Russia.



The law has been replicated in Kyrgyzstan, though not yet adopted; and in Ukraine in January 2014, but there it was repealed after Yanukovich fled the country.

The aim seems in all cases to be one of asserting state control over civil society, which is seen as dangerous. Its effect is to silence one component in the debates within society. Such legislation is in breach of international conventions on human rights. One comment was that the aim seems to be to separate sheep from goats in the non-governmental sector: tolerating NGOs which work with local authorities to provide services while repressing those which engage in advocacy. The effect was to encourage a sense of dependence and to introduce self-censorship, so that NGOs are able to relieve the problems in society but not to contribute to shaping the structural responses to them.

A full version of Kate's remarks, which includes a wealth of valuable detail, is available on the BEARR Trust website at [http://www.bearr.org/pdfs/Notes for BEARR Trust conf KL.pdf](http://www.bearr.org/pdfs/Notes%20for%20BEARR%20Trust%20conf%20KL.pdf)

Session 2 – Central Asia



Charles Buxton from INTRAC, based in Bishkek, said it was the role of civil society to be pragmatic and optimistic. In Central Asia, INTRAC is mostly involved with social welfare NGOs supporting vulnerable groups including rural communities. Ten years ago Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan severed links with international NGOs, so INTRAC works in Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan. For all of them the external environment is difficult, with the conflict in

Afghanistan and challenges from Uzbekistan and in inter-ethnic relations. Many perceptions in the region are formed by the Russian-language media. Societies are Muslim and, as in the UK, some young people are being radicalised with IS(IL) having an influence. Civil society is active, with about half of NGOs in a recent survey active in health and social welfare. Many are also active in civic issues, such as savings groups, dacha communities, water issues and so on. These have an important role to play. There is a demand for social justice, particularly after the nationalist-inspired unrest in 2010.

NGOs deliver communal services sometimes with EU funding, and as a result local authorities have to consider standards in these activities. Initiative groups are a way of interacting with local government, but as yet they are less active in remote areas. They are gaining confidence to challenge government. One has set up a youth centre in a village with UNICEF, but the environment is difficult, with secondary education underfunded and the challenges of ideology and migration. In Kyrgyzstan 95% of NGOs are unaffected by political problems, and have little difficulty registering, while in Tajikistan the need to re-register has proved a deterrent and 50% of NGOs did not re-register. Nonetheless there has been a conservative backlash against e.g. international adoptions, LGBT rights and sex education. New NGOs are being established, without the amount of international funding that the older NGOs received.

Aisuluu Bolotbaeva, Executive Director of the Central Asian AIDS Foundation, who joined the conference via Skype, added first-hand experience of some of these issues, talking about challenges in HIV/AIDS work in Central Asia, particularly with vulnerable groups such as sex workers, the LGBT community and people who inject drugs. The threat of prospective legislation banning information about LGBT issues is acting as a deterrent to such groups in seeking medical and other advice, as they fear discrimination. A particular challenge for such marginalised groups is that they cannot

access healthcare if they have no ID or permanent address. It is important to inform them of their rights. In 2012 there was an attempt to criminalise sex work, but advocacy about the possible effects of such legislation on HIV rates made sure it was voted down. Instead local police 'moral departments' were set up, with an equally intimidating effect, and resulted in a witch hunt against sex workers.

Session 3 – the South Caucasus

Nikhil Roy, Programme Development Director, Prison Reform International (PRI) and Gwen Burchell, United Aid for Azerbaijan (UAFA), Baku, spoke about the situation in Georgia and Azerbaijan. PRI have an office in Tbilisi (also in Moscow and Astana), and have done a large amount of work on the situation of women prisoners. Eighty percent of women prisoners in Georgia are mothers and have problems maintaining contact with their children. Of the three countries of the South Caucasus, PRI finds it easiest to work in Georgia. Changes have been implemented since a huge protest broke out when the use of torture in prisons was made public two years ago. Azerbaijan is the hardest to work in and the least open. It has an Ombudsman for Prisoners but the incumbent is not independent of the state authorities. Armenia is somewhere between the other two in terms of openness.



Gwen Burchell, who has worked in the region for 15 years, said that the main challenge was the lack of trust. Corruption remains a serious issue. The aim of UAFA's work is long term development of health and education services for children. Sixty of the staff of 70 are local medical and social care workers. They use evidence as a basis for their work and ensure that every child has a care plan. UAFA also conducts research and advocacy. International NGOs often come with a specific short-term project to implement, which provides for no long-term sustainability. UAFA has worked to raise funds locally, build confidence, and ensure long-term continuity. Its methodology is now being introduced into pre-schools by the government of Azerbaijan. All donations it receives are made public to ensure complete openness.



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Session 4 – Russia and Ukraine

In the last session we heard about current challenges in Russia and in the eastern part of Ukraine, where there is armed conflict.

Evgeniya Alekseeva, Director, Public Health and Social Development Foundation FOCUS-MEDIA, Moscow, a former



paediatric surgeon, showed a slide with the spectrum of civil society organisations active in Russia. She spoke of the challenge of coming to terms with a government-dominated media and accepting that it doesn't always tell the truth.

The situation of NGOs in Russia has changed a great deal in the last five years. Former political movements are undertaking social work, while social entrepreneurship is growing. Informal groups and

social media are the latest forms of civic activism. A recent CAF Russia survey showed that 40% of Russians give to charity, but most of them (82%) donate spontaneously, with no strategy. Currently, new legislation is being drafted to cover 'acceptable', i.e. socially oriented NGOs, resulting in a 'separation of sheep from goats' in civil society. Volunteering is developing. Most donations go to sick children. Since 2011 presidential grants have been available to socially oriented NGOs. At first they bid in a real competition but now it is clear that there is a list of those NGOs which may be given grants. State grants are very short in duration, for only about 8-9 months, making any strategic level work by NGOs very difficult. Most foreign donors are leaving Russia.

NGOs deemed to be 'foreign agents' are barred from receiving state funding. Over 1,000 checks on NGOs have been carried out in the past couple of years, since the new legislation such as the FA law took effect. FOCUS-MEDIA provides information about HIV/AIDS, but finds it difficult to inform the public about sexual health as this remains a taboo in Russia. The government wants to gain popularity but reduce the costs of providing social services, an aim which is served by getting NGOs to compete with the state to deliver them.

Evgeniya's further reflections following the conference can be found on page 7.

Valentina Diomkina, Chairman, Donetsk Youth Debate Centre, Ukraine, spoke eloquently about the crisis in Ukraine and the situation facing the population in Donetsk. She is not currently based there, as most NGOs have had to leave the conflict zones. Originally she was involved with work to tackle child labour, such as in prostitution, illegal coal mines, and begging; promotion of democracy among children; and advocacy for children's rights. By the end of the Yanukovich

regime last winter only about 10% of the NGOs registered in Ukraine were really active, as they had no support from the state and could only rely on foreign funding. Reform has been happening from below, with ideas, lobbying and initiation of reforms.

Many former civil society activists have recently joined state organisations and the relationship between civil society and the state in Ukraine has changed radically. An explosion of civic activity has occurred. Civil society is trying to

help with the mental conflict between people in west Ukraine who are familiar with European values and those in the east who know Russia social values best. Many children are traumatised by war and displacement and the state was not prepared or equipped to provide for their needs. Civil society was better able to react, and 149 new voluntary groups emerged. Valentina thought small NGOs needed support, and also expertise in working with traumatised people, especially children. In discussion the law on lustration came up. It could affect 1.5 million civil servants. Attitudes to such legislation vary, both inside and outside Ukraine, but on the whole civil society in Ukraine supports it, hoping that it will cleanse society of corruption and make it possible for NGOs to work with the new politicians and government.

Summing up, **BEARR Trustee Nicola Ramsden** posed some questions: how would the newly emerging civic activists' groups cope with the increased regulation of civil society and will NGOs in the region be able to continue with advocacy? Will new ways for civil society to communicate help, and will grassroots community groups find their place as a middle layer between governments and NGOs? Can trust in civil society increase? In the wake of the foreign agents law, will foreign donors have to tread more carefully and be more cautious in the words they use? If states in the region appear to be becoming more paternalistic, could a growing middle class mitigate against this – or has 'homo sovieticus' returned? And what should the BEARR Trust's role be in these circumstances?

Robert Brinkley, Chairman of the BEARR Trust, expressed thanks on behalf of the Trust to the British Ukrainian Society for its sponsorship, and warmly thanked the volunteers and trustees who had worked to make the conference possible.



Further photographs of the conference can be found on the back page of this Newsletter, and on the BEARR website at <http://www.bearr.org/the-bearr-trust-2014-annual-conference/>

Reflections on the position of NGOs in Russia

Following the conference, Evgeniya Alekseeva sent us her further reflections.

I have personally found it extremely difficult to accept the changes in government policies given that the past 20 years have been very productive and full of hope for me, having been successful in realising my potential by becoming the head of an NGO. However, nowadays both I and many others need to resort to housework to relieve the psychological pressure caused by our inability to identify ourselves with the state. We must stop blaming ourselves for everything that's going on and instead find new ways of engaging with positive forces that exist both within and outside Russia. There are very few voices in support of Russia as a nation, which is blamed for everything the government does.

We must return again and again to the words of Chekhov which refer to 'squeezing the slave from yourself, drop by drop'. This is very difficult for many people to do as it suggests that they're becoming vulnerable. It is also well understood that those in authority try to complicate the process at every turn. It is particularly difficult for people with moderate views who try to avoid 'politics'. On the one hand, there's pressure from government as people will often be at odds with its policies and, on the other, hassle from critics of Russia who are likely criticize you too, if you disagree somewhat with their points of view. This forces many people to keep quiet. One could say the same about NGOs, given the difference in understanding of the situation between socially-orientated NGOs and human rights activists. The Government has contributed to the split between these groups by trying to divide NGOs into 'black' and 'white' in order to protect themselves from the colour revolutions.

It seems that the 'foreign agents' law is aimed at human rights NGOs, but it should be acknowledged that we all come under this legislation, as the broad definition of political activity, which is purposely included under the law, means that we are all left in limbo. We are allowed to lobby and influence the authorities so long as such action benefits the government in one way or another.



Students in Kolomna organise a health protection campaign

The government's intentions are generally clear as it wants to relinquish more responsibilities and, in principle, hand over some social services to NGOs and to secure improvements by reducing costs through involving NGOs.

Socially-oriented NGOs are, to a large extent, allowed to participate in the work of Public Councils organised by government agencies. They have been successful in promoting a variety of issues, e.g. the idea of an independent assessment of NGO activities, as well as their involvement in the provision of services.

One shouldn't forget that we are talking about a historically very short period of time. Changes in world attitudes among large numbers of people won't happen overnight, so it is important to have a group of people who can act as the driving force for change. There are few such people around at present as the government is making every effort to marginalise and force them to conform. We had hoped that we had left the USSR, but we were wrong.

The Kremlin has decided to rely on the conservative element of society and adopt this ideology.

NGOs started out as willing accomplices of western donors. Consequently, many of their values and strategic goals were quite unfamiliar to many people, even foreigners. Many accepted this in order to receive donations. However, many NGOs have gradually adopted these values, implemented different approaches and ways of working, as well as project evaluation. The time has come to make a decision on whether we should no longer be involved in already well-established areas, avoid them or look to financial support from the West as before. Work on the human immune deficiency virus is a good example of this. Talks on developing a scientific strategy to combat viral infections have not yet reached a conclusion.

There's a general lack of faith in NGOs not only on behalf of the public, but also within the NGO community itself. A lack of professionalism is rife, including at the highest levels of government, with few exceptions. What gives me hope is the growth of independent initiatives currently being developed to meet existing demand, such as the needs of sick children, adults and children who've fallen on hard times, animals, natural disasters etc.

Contact

Evgeniya Alekseeva

Director, Public Health and Social Development
FOCUS-MEDIA, Moscow

zhenya_alexeeva@focus-media.ru

Updates on the position of NGOs in Ukraine

Odessa: Faith Hope Love

by Caz Hattam

I spent six weeks last autumn working with Faith Hope Love (VNL is the Russian abbreviation) in Odessa, an NGO long known and supported by BEARR. It was founded to target people-trafficking, and now has centres for refugees, abused woman, and those affected by HIV/AIDS, including the gay community and sex workers. Since the outbreak of war in the East, it has also dedicated itself to the issue of internal migration.

In Odessa the war echoes in the avalanching exchange rate plastered throughout the city, the price of tea bags, the radio news that crackles on public transport, and the influx of almost 20,000 Eastern Ukrainians. Many arrived in summer clutching their documents expecting to be home for Christmas and haven't been able to return. Civil society has risen to the challenge.

The government

It might be easy to say that civil society didn't really have a choice. Many Ukrainian IDPs (internally displaced persons) claim that the government has all but abandoned them. Certainly, I met many who mourned the fate of elderly relatives, poor families and wounded soldiers stranded in the East or in Odessa without physical or social protection. But the government seems to have fairly successfully and quickly transferred pension payments and provided accommodation, however basic, to the most vulnerable; the government has promised to reimburse sanatoria¹ for housing about 5% of IDPs, generally the disabled, and has also relocated orphans. IDPs find government officials on arrival at the station in Odessa to guide them through registration. Maybe we should be wary of shooting the blame entirely in their direction.

VNL's work with IDPs

As is often the case with NGOs in the former Soviet Union, VNL's work depends on an ability to match international grants and the evolving situation. In the summer, they received a grant from the International Organisation for Migration under a 'Warm Winter' project. A steady flow of IDPs trickle into their office to fill out a form declaring their status, many choking back tears as they scan the answers to the question 'How long do you intend to stay in Odessa?' for the tick box 'as yet, unknown'. They take their time filling out a list of their families' needs, each with their specific requests, from 3 litre pans to medicine to thermal underwear.

The forms are collected each evening, meticulously typed into a vast spreadsheet, then posted to Kiev, assessed for duplications and impossible requests, and ultimately – if sometimes only partially – approved. The VNL team then create lists of clothes in their particular shapes and sizes and buys them in bulk, dividing them among families, storing them in nooks and crannies of the cramped office or in the spare room and hallway of the vice-director Olga Kostyuk. They then ring each applicant and organise a time and place for collection. It is often babushkas and mums with a kid on each arm that totter away with their sacks of clothes, toiletries and kitchenware in the hope of a warmer winter.

Some issues

I'm loathe to criticise any attempt to deal with a sad and unpredictable situation and am only doing so in the hope that it will help improve aid, and not discourage it. It's already clear from my description of the project, although perhaps not from the statistics and photos in official reports, that the work is incredibly tedious. Each applicant is told to wait at least 3 weeks. In my last weeks there, it was unclear how much more funding was still available, and applicants were warned about this and told to wait at least a month, taking them into the heart of winter. Because of limited funds, VNL rely on word-of-mouth to tell IDPs about the help available, fearing a flood of expectant and disappointed applicants. In a stroke of slightly dark Ukrainian humour, they also joked that IDPs would still go hungry, but at least they'd be warm; the project only catered for some of their most basic needs. One of the most obvious solutions and one of the most pressing issues recognised by VNL – if not yet by international organisations – is the need for a more coordinated effort.

Coordination

I travelled to Kiev for an (inspiring) Civil Society Forum and there collected the contact details of several individuals and organisations seeking to link up their projects. Many of those I talked to were themselves IDPs. The projects are too many to name, and sometimes are as simple and incredible as individuals opening their homes to IDPs for low or no rent or driving to collect them from the East. The Red Cross distributes one-off aid. The UN carries out monitoring in sanatoria, and received and distributed a lorry of aid to IDPs on 20 November. The Dobryi Samaritanin Fund has converted

¹ Soviet-era institutions intended for rest and recuperation on the outskirts of bigger cities

its accommodation for children's camps in the village of Maiaki into a home for 130 IDPs; their work deserves another article! Each is vaguely aware of the others' activities, but each admits there is a lack of communication and even a hint of competition between them.



Photo: Roma Medjanik

A jeweller from East Ukraine has brought his equipment with him and is continuing his business in his temporary (sanatorium) home

Future plans

I asked one of the VNL project coordinators how the IDPs would find work in Odessa and he asked me if I had any ideas, which shut me up for a while. If they find money and time, VNL would like to start a project to support business initiatives. VNL volunteers and law students Artem and Alesha are working on a project proposal to create a centre dedicated to solving IDPs' legal queries and issues. VNL dream of an effective coordinating centre where international and local NGOs, analysts, government departments, employers, landlords and IDPs can immediately be in dialogue on their arrival in Odessa. Nobody knows how long the fighting will continue and what home will look like for IDPs when it stops, a gratingly hard reality which means that civil society has its work cut out for the long term.

Contact

Caz Hattam

cazhattam@gmail.com

<https://www.facebook.com/odvnl?fref=ts>

<http://mashedpotato1.wix.com/faithhopelove>

<http://vnl.com.ua/>

Crimea: Svet

STAND International has worked in partnership with Crimea-based Ukrainian NGO Svet since late 2012. A grant from the BEARR Trust's Small Grants Scheme enabled us to implement a joint project with Svet and Turbota pro Litnikh (Age Concern Ukraine) on intergenerational volunteering. Svet recruited and trained young volunteers who were then matched with older people and undertook volunteer placements arranged by Turbota pro Litnikh to provide everyday assistance, support and befriending.

We have kept in touch with Anton Plaksun, Director of Svet, and he kindly wrote the following update for this Newsletter.

'A year ago, in autumn 2013, Heather and Ella travelled from Scotland to Crimea to see the progress made by our joint intergenerational volunteering project. Just one year later the Svet team has been banned from entering the territory of Crimea. In Scotland the past year brought the Referendum, while in Ukraine there was the 'Euromaidan', the annexation of Crimea and the start of a war which is still going on today.

Ukraine has changed enormously over the last year. Today it is no longer the politicians but social movements which are

**by Heather Stacey, STAND International
and Anton Plaksun, Director of Svet**

driving the direction of development in the country. And it is first and foremost civic society, followed by the state, which is leading efforts to help those affected by the fighting.

There are currently around 500,000 internally displaced persons who have been forced to leave Eastern Ukraine, as well as people who are living in areas where fighting has taken place or is still going on. They are receiving support primarily from voluntary initiatives which have taken on the important task of helping people who have suffered as a result of the war.

Svet has become involved with this work through a voluntary movement called Joint Aid, which brings together NGOs, volunteers and activists. Help is provided predominantly to older people and other vulnerable groups. In September Svet, together with other volunteers, went to Sloviansk to help carry out repairs to ten buildings inhabited by older people which had been damaged during the 'anti-terrorist operation'. Svet volunteers also collected around two tons of food and distributed it to older people in the occupied territory.

BEARR SGS project reports: Belarus

In the summer the Svet team was forced to leave Crimea, which is now a protected military zone, where the rights of anyone who doesn't agree with Russia's seizure of the peninsula are repressed. Anyone who challenges Russia's actions is persecuted, especially Crimean Tartars, activists and journalists. Since the start of the occupation of Crimea by Russia, human rights protection has been significantly restricted by Russian and local authorities. A report was recently produced on this issue by Human Rights Watch (www.hrw.org/news/2014/11/17/crimea-human-rights-decline), according to which Russia has violated a number of its obligations under international humanitarian law, in particular in relation to the protection of civil rights.

Virtually all independent journalists, academics and public figures have left Crimea. Now business people are



Svet's moped volunteers in happier times in Crimea

leaving too. There are cases of people being beaten, arrested or sacked from their jobs for speaking in Ukrainian. Life is particularly hard for the Crimean Tartars: a concerted effort is being made to intimidate them into accepting Russian authority. Recently there have been numerous unexplained murders of young Crimean Tartars. Many others disappeared without trace.

Our organisation is continuing its work in Ukraine, delivering a range of volunteering, educational and humanitarian projects. For example, Svet is currently running a project with support from the US Embassy in Ukraine on developing student self-government in south-eastern Ukraine. And we haven't forgotten about Crimea.

Svet organised the 'Crimeans in Need' initiative, which helps internally displaced people from Crimea to begin to lead a normal life. Over the course of six months, help has been provided (in the form of food, money for the move, help finding somewhere to live and legal assistance) to over 200 people from Crimea. Through social networks around £5,000 has been raised to help people leaving Crimea.'

Svet remains optimistic about the future and we at STAND International hope to continue our partnership with further joint projects.

Contact

Anton Plaksun

Head of Ukrainian NGO Svet

www.gosvitlo.org.ua

BEARR Small Grants Scheme: project reports

Early Intervention and Diversion Project in Gomel, Belarus

Grantee: Chernobyl Children's Project

Project: To provide training in child care and development, and support young people and their families at risk of being institutionalised for bad behaviour in the Chernobyl-affected region of Belarus.

Since May 2013 Chernobyl Children's Project has been employing two half-time psychologists to work with families with severe social problems. They are doing a job which would be carried out in the UK by a social worker, but as there are no equivalent

posts in Belarus, psychologists were selected and given some training in social work skills.

A grant from the British Embassy funded these salaries from May 2013 to April 2015.

The primary focus of the work is to support children who are in danger of being admitted to a custodial school, where children and parents are deprived of their rights. Girls who commit a crime, or are judged to have unmanageable behaviour, are sent to a

school in Petrikov, boys to a school in Mogilev.

Our psychologists work with the Gomel City Executive Juvenile Affairs Team, the Prosecution Service, Local Schools and the Custodial Schools to reduce the number of referrals and re-referrals to these schools.

CCP applied to the BEARR Trust for funding for a training course in Restorative Practices; a national seminar to share the results of the work; and to give support and encouragement to some of the children and families in the project.

The project has been working with 19 children between 10 and 17 years old, who live with their families, and who have been referred to the criminal justice system for problems with alcohol, drugs and stealing. Some of them also self-harm. There is a second group of 17 year olds who all attend a college for people with mild disabilities.

In early August a leisure and entertainment programme was organised. All the children had an opportunity to spend time together and visit many local attractions and centres. They visited 'Under Sea World' and a Waxworks Exhibition, went to the cinema, and had a day out in the



beautiful park in Gomel, which included a motor boat trip.

A two-day session on 'Effective Parenting' was well received by most of the parents. There was a craft day involving all the children which took place at the Gomel Social Centre where the psychologists are based.

On 20 August an educational event to raise motivation for studies, 'Hello, School', was carried out for the ten most active and interested children, during which the participants received school stationery sets.

During the week 18-23 August a 'family art' competition was held,

entitled 'We Are Together', which aimed at uniting families and pointing out the importance of spending time together and having common goals and values.

The charity has two very experienced trainers in Restorative Practice, Simon Saxton and Jacqueline Raynor. Restorative Practice is an approach which respects the dignity and equality of each person. It incorporates problem-solving, does not seek to apportion blame, and is an effective way of preventing breakdowns in schools placements.

Simon and Jacqui built on earlier training they had delivered in Gomel, when they led a National Seminar and three-day training programme in October.

Both the seminar and the training course were attended by the Deputy Heads of Regional Juvenile Commissions from all over Belarus and from all the districts of Gomel Region. There was also a psychologist from the Institute of Advanced Learning who will be able to pass on much of what she learned to her students in Gomel, and a representative of the Council of Ministers who invited Simon and Jacqui to come to give some training in Minsk.

The Director of Petrikov School gave a presentation about how they

continues page 13



BEARR Small Grants Scheme: project reports

Sexual violence in Russia: empowering professionals to help children and young victims

Grantee: BICE International

Project: To help combat the effects of abuse and sexual violence against young people through training for psychologists and social workers throughout the Chelyabinsk region

Violence, sexual violence and sexual abuse are unfortunately universal problems. They may occur in every country, in any background, within every social class.¹

Of course, some elements make children and young people more vulnerable, such as a disadvantaged environment, transactional situations, a violent context, an alcoholic background, anomie, low self-esteem or weak internal capacities.

In Russia, these issues also exist² and all the aforementioned exacerbating factors are at play. However, there is one particular element that makes the situation in Russia quite specific: the psycho-social system. Inherited from the Soviet period, the care provided to children and young people with social and psychological disorders or problems is often still based on a medical approach. The basis of social work has therefore evolved very little and the 'intervention approaches', based on the individual and on his potential resources, are not yet much developed.

That is why, when our International NGO, BICE³, in partnership with the local organization 'Civic Initiative Zlatoust', decided to address violence and specifically sexual abuse toward children and young people in the Urals Region, it was crucial for us to make sure that child victims of violence could evolve in a safe, nurturing and

protective environment. Therefore, the natural target for our action was going to be professionals working with children, so that they could provide adequate care to children and young victims of violence or sexual abuse.

In spring 2014, we were ready to start the project. That is when we learned that BICE had won The BEARR Trust Small Grants Scheme 2014 for projects focused on the reintegration of vulnerable young people (16-25 years old) into society in the Urals Federal Region of Russia. It was a turning point in our work; thanks to the BEARR Trust support, we were able to implement the planned activities.

Strengthening professionals' capacities to provide appropriate assistance to young victims of abuse, and specifically sexual violence, is an efficient way to ensure the physical and psychological recovery of young victims of violence and to promote their resilience⁴ and reintegration.

Therefore, for a week in October 2014, BICE and 'Civic Initiative Zlatoust' gathered together 33 participants for a training session on sexual abuse. These people were mainly psychologists (from

schools, crisis centers and hotlines, and from a committee on children's affairs) but also social workers, educators, teachers, police officers and investigators from different towns in the Chelyabinsk region: Zlatoust, Chelyabinsk, Satka, Magnitogorsk and Ust-Katav.



Photo: BICE

The purpose of the training was to equip these professionals to provide adequate care to children and young victims of sexual abuse. As this is a complex and touchy topic, specialised training is highly important for those wanting to understand and help these children and young people.

The trainer, Martine Nisse, is a world renowned specialist on sexual abuse. As a family therapist and co-founder of the Buttes-Chaumont Centre (Paris, France),

she is specialised in therapy support for victims and perpetrators of violence inside and outside the family.

She approached many crucial aspects of the theme: the initial interview with the child, incestuous families, extra-family sexual abuse, family systems therapy, genogram, resilience, work with sexual aggressors, dissociation and post-traumatic stress disorder, work using the child's drawings, judicial procedure, identification and reporting of child sexual abuse cases and support for child victims during investigations and trials.

Thanks to the training, handbooks and monitoring, professionals are now equipped to spread best practice within their organisations and to their colleagues. The local partner organisation 'Civic Initiative Zlatoust' will monitor implementation of the project and evaluate its impact on children up to 2017.

Evaluating the results of the project will be the main challenge to our initiative: we will need fine-grained qualitative tools to be able to ascertain whether the resilience capacities of a child have developed. It is quite an arduous task, but it is coming along quite well.

To fight sexual violence, we and our local partner also implemented prevention activities in the Urals Region. These aim to equip children and families so that they can face risks of abuse more efficiently, and they use three participative prevention practices:

'Grain of Sand', 'A vaccination for child abuse' and 'School for parents'.

BICE's purpose and that of 'Civic Initiative Zlatoust' is also to mobilise a multidisciplinary network so that best practice can be implemented on a wider scale. We actively involve local,

national and international authorities so that we can share practices and approaches. We hope those promoted by the project can be implemented and institutionalised.

Through prevention, adequate care and advocacy, we wish to implement holistic projects that really contribute to a reduction in sexual violence and the protection of children in Russia and worldwide.

Contact

Amelie Cook

BICE Program Manager
BICE – rue de Lausanne, 44
Geneva

www.bice.org

Amelie.cook@bice.org

Notes

1. Child Abuse : A global view, Michelle A. Epstein , Beth Schwartz-Kenney , Michelle McCauley, Greenwood Press, ©2001
2. Ibid.
3. BICE is an international NGO created in 1948 in Paris. BICE's objective is the holistic growth of all children, its mission is to promote dignity of children and ensure that their rights are being respected. In order to do so, BICE relies on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). www.bice.org
4. Resilience is a key concept in BICE's work. It can be defined as the capacity of a human being or a group to overcome adversities and grow in life.



Photo: BICE

Trainees also received two handbooks, in Russian, edited by BICE: 'Incest, paedophilia, child abuse' by Martine Nisse and Pierre Sabourin and 'How to interview a child victim of abuse within a legal procedure' by Voix de l'Enfant.

Early Intervention and Diversion Project in Gomel, Belarus *cont. from page 11*

work with girls in his special school. The girls are sent there for committing crimes and usually come from very dysfunctional families.

Following the seminar there were three days of training in restorative practice and the participants and trainers were taken to visit Petrikov School. The grant from the BEARR Trust added great value to the small project which Chernobyl Children's

Project was undertaking with funding from the British Embassy. It enabled many activities to be organised for the children and their parents and facilitated the spread of understanding about restorative practices, and about the need to move away from the custodial schools model, among those in positions of influence in many parts of Belarus.

Contact

Linda Walker

Executive Director, Chernobyl Children's Project UK
Kinder House, Fitzalan Street,
Glossop, SK13 7DL
+44 1457 863534
+44 7976 653610

ccprojectuk@gmail.com

www.chernobyl-children.org.uk

Country Profile 8: Kazakhstan¹

The Republic of Kazakhstan, with its territory of over 1 million square miles (larger than Western Europe) is the world's largest landlocked country, situated between Russia, China, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan and the Caspian Sea. Stretching from the mountainous, populated areas in the east, to the energy-laden lowlands in the west, and from the agriculturally rich southern lands, through the arid central steppes, to the industrialised north, where the capital Astana is located, Kazakhstan has a population of 17 million, of which the Kazakhs comprise over half, Russians a quarter, and the smaller central Asian minorities the remainder.

Economic Development

Kazakhstan is officially an 'upper middle income' country, with enormous reserves of fossil fuels and other natural resources (uranium, copper, zinc) as well as a large agricultural sector. Since independence, there has been major foreign investment in the oil industry, helping to spur rapid economic growth of 8% per year during the first decade of this century. By 2010 GDP per capita had grown more than 10 times since the mid-1990s.

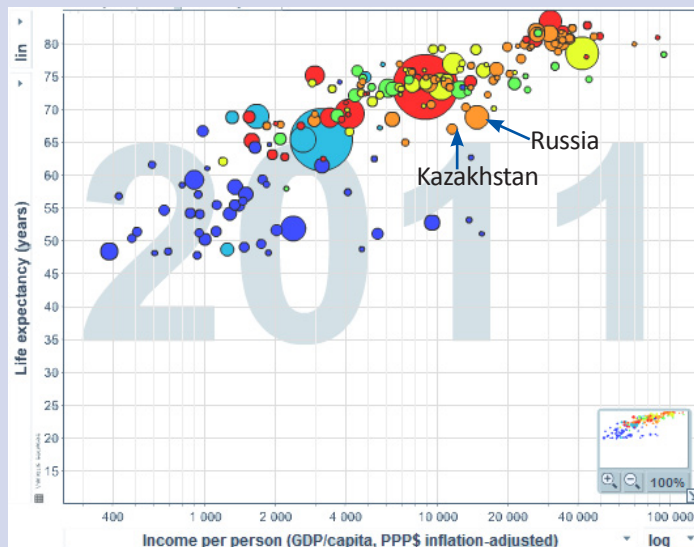
The extractive industries have been and will continue to be at the heart of Kazakhstan's growth, although a major programme of diversification (into transport, pharma and telecommunications) has been embarked upon.

Social Welfare and Health

In 2011, Kazakhstan launched a new set of social policies (Kazakhstan 2030) designed to strengthen its domestic socioeconomic profile and in particular to improve population health.

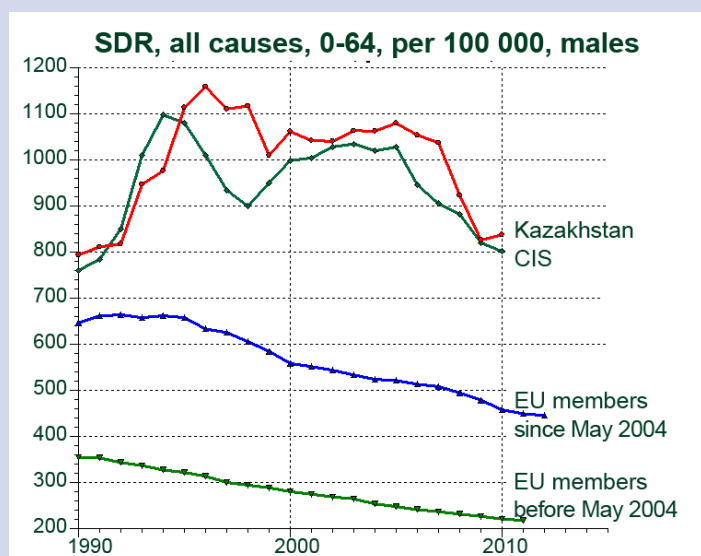
Although many health measures suggest that Kazakhstan is improving relative to its regional competitors, it continues to lag behind equivalently sized economies.

Life expectancy at birth, in 2011, was 67.89, compared to the average for Europe and Central Asia of 75.2, and as is clear from the above figure, Kazakhstan underperforms in this regard against all non-African (blue) similarly sized economies. The standardised death rate (SDR) for males (see graph, right) confirms the deteriorating position relative to Eastern and Western Europe since 1990, while also capturing the rapid improvements since 2005.



Although cardiovascular diseases are the leading cause of mortality among adults, HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and blood-borne infectious diseases are of increasing public health concern. Beyond coronary heart disease, for which Kazakhstan has the 5th highest mortality rate in the world, other leading and worrisome causes of death include external injuries and suicides for which Kazakhstan is ranked 2nd and 3rd worst in the global league tables.

It is clear that many public health challenges remain, including the need to improve public health infrastructure, address the social determinants of health, and implement better health impact assessments to inform health policies and public health practice.



¹ Data comes from UN Health-for-all database and the WHO (<http://www.who.int/countries/en/>).

About The BEARR Trust

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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 republics. Its mission now is to help children and other vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in Russia, Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the South Caucasus. We believe the best way to do this is to help small NGOs working in health and social welfare to build knowledge, know-how, skills and contacts including with those doing similar work in the UK.

We pursue our aims by:

- supporting organisations committed to reform in the health and social sectors
- facilitating networking and exchange of information
- encouraging sharing of experience and learning
- helping organisations working in the region to identify potential partners
- providing seed funding to assist selected organisations to launch or extend partnerships.

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The BEARR Trust endeavours to include as wide a debate and as broad a range of opinions as possible in the Newsletter to capture the diversity of NGO activity in the region in which it works. The BEARR Trust cannot be held responsible for the views expressed by authors in their articles.

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Translators needed!

The BEARR Trust has a continuing need for volunteer Russian–English translators to translate news items supplied weekly by ASI in Moscow. We have been very lucky with our translators, who have generously given their time and expertise to BEARR. But they have a habit of going off into full-time jobs or gaining paid work which must of course take precedence, and we wish them well in their new endeavours.

The work provides a useful opportunity for anyone who wants to keep up her/his Russian while helping a good and interesting cause. The texts are mostly about health, welfare and NGO issues, and normally not technical. Each batch is on average two pages of A4. Anyone who could contemplate doing a batch say once a month should please write to info@bearr.org. All translators will be asked to do a try-out before joining the regular roster of translators.