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designate of BEARR**

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Teaching beekeeping skills to refugees in Armenia, a project by NGO Improve our Village, supported by The BEARR Trust – see page 11

## Small Grants Scheme 2017: Grants awarded

**T**he BEARR Small Grants Scheme 2017 invited bids for grants for projects dealing with mental health issues in 12 countries in our region.

The BEARR Trust received a large number of applications for grants this year, showing the urgent need in the area chosen. 168 applications were received in all: from Armenia (13), Azerbaijan (7), Belarus (11), Georgia (2), Kazakhstan (8), Kyrgyzstan (11), Moldova (5), Russia (34), Tajikistan (8), Ukraine (69). Section A was for projects in Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan, Section B for the other countries.

Grants were awarded as follows:

### Section A:

**International Society for Human Rights, Yerevan, Armenia** for the project 'Care for Adolescents with Mental Health Issues at Home'. The NGO plans to develop a guide on family care methods for adolescents with mental health issues; organise workshops for families on how to care for their children at home; and support these families with weekly visits and essential care products.

**SOS Children's Villages, Yerevan, Armenia** for the project 'Children with Mental Health Issues: A Challenge for Caregivers and Specialists'. The grant will be used to train school teachers and mothers of children with mental health issues, and to provide psychological services to children.

**Azerbaijan Social Work Public Union, Baku, Azerbaijan, with the State Committee for Family, Women and Children's Issues**, for the project 'Increasing Mental Health Awareness using an Ecological Perspective'. This will involve seminars for adolescents, their parents and teachers in three cities (Baku, Khanlar and Quba); roundtables for family support centres and government agencies; and radio, TV and newspaper discussions in these cities.

**Centre for Women in the Modern World, Baku, Azerbaijan, with the Union of Women's Centres of Georgia**, for the project 'Mental Health among Refugee Women in Azerbaijan and Georgia. Awareness Raising Campaigns and Assistance'. This cross-border project will involve eight training sessions in Azerbaijan and four in Georgia.

### Section B:

**Open Doors, Nikopol, Ukraine** for the project 'Respect for Human Rights in the Field of Health – Mentally Ill People in Ukraine'. The NGO is planning to organise monitoring visits to psychiatric hospitals and boarding schools in Dnipropetrovsk and Zaporizhzhya regions, to monitor and analyse violations (including cases of torture and ill-treatment), prepare recommendations to the Ministries of Health and Social Policy, provide legal assistance to those whose rights have been violated; and organise a telephone hotline for those wishing to report violations of the rights of mentally ill people.

**Ukrainian Catholic University, Lviv, Ukraine** for the project 'From thought to action, from action to heart: overcoming the stigma of mental health disorders'. UCU is planning to train journalists about mental health problems and issues of stigmatisation and to organise a public roundtable dedicated to mental health issues in Ukraine.

**Chernobyl Children's Project, UK**, in partnership with **Supporting Children Together, Gomel, Belarus** for the project 'Rehabilitation for Children and Adolescents after Treatment in Psychiatric Hospitals'. This project aims to help children reintegrate into their school and community after treatment and help reduce the stigma of mental illness, as well as reduce the number of children being treated in psychiatric hospitals.

**Public Fund 'Gender-Vector', Karabalta, Kyrgyzstan**, for their project 'A Reboot'. The Fund is planning to organise training on mental health issues for the gay community, as well as a roundtable for media and psychologists.

**Institute for Democracy, Comrat, Moldova**, for the project 'Psychological Assistance to Victims of Trafficking and Domestic Violence'. The grant will support a permanent centre for psychological assistance to victims of trafficking and domestic violence, running a telephone hotline and contributing to the creation of an inter-regional network of NGOs working in this field.

**Public Organization 'Arzanda' Khujand, Tajikistan**, for the project 'Preventing mental health issues through awareness-raising activities and improving the social dialogue of households' by organising workshops and work with local communities.

**Ulitsa Mira, St Petersburg, with St Petersburg Foundation for Crisis Psychological Help for Children and Young People 'New Steps'**, for the project 'Crisis Psychological intervention for children who have experienced abuse and neglect'.

**We send our congratulations and best wishes to all the grantees, and look forward to hearing about their experiences on completion of their projects. In addition to formal assessments, grantees will be asked to contribute a short report for publication in the BEARR Newsletter, so that everyone can learn from their experience.**

*The BEARR Trust Small Grants Scheme 2017 is funded by donations from generous individuals, companies and foundations, to whom the Trust extends its thanks.*

# Understanding the demographics of death: Russia's middle-aged men

**Professor Christopher J Gerry,  
University of Oxford**

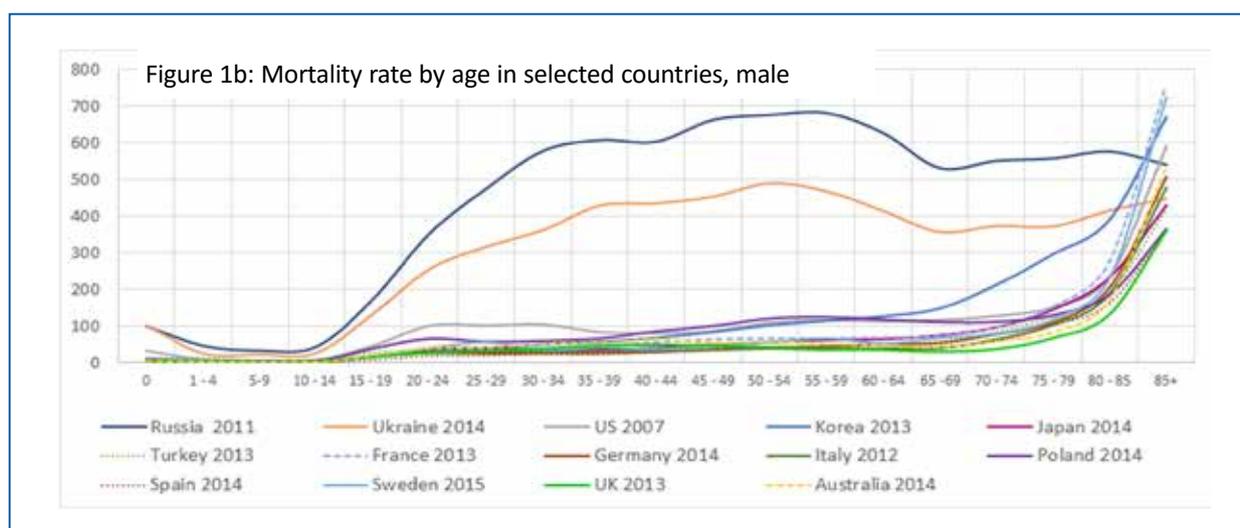
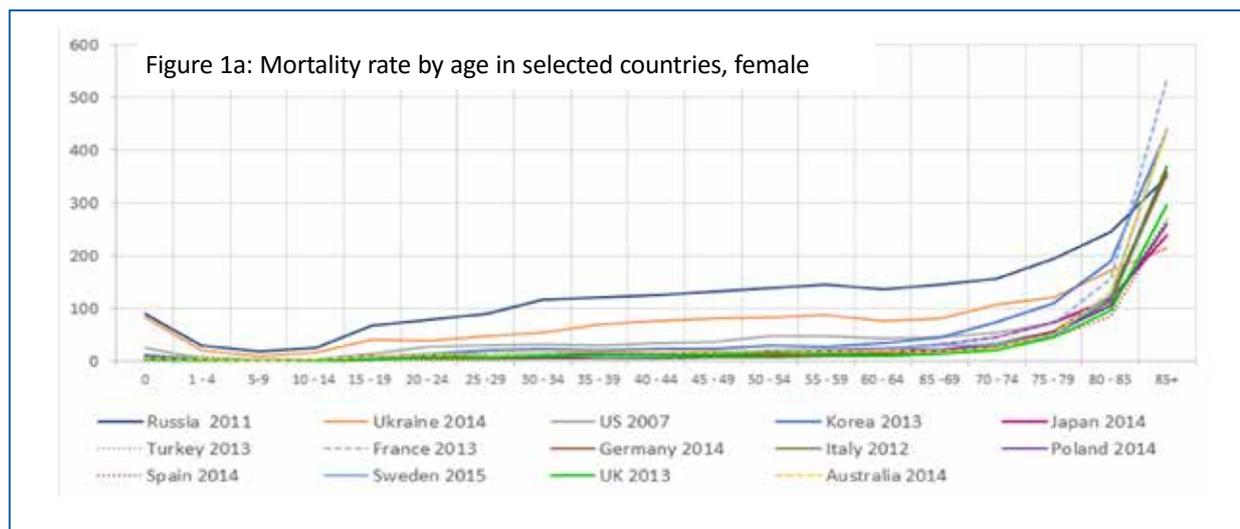
**A**fter the turbulence of the 1990s and the explosive oil boom of the 2000s, the global financial crisis of 2007-8 took its time to penetrate Russia. But now, in the context of slow economic growth, diminished oil prices, international sanctions, an ageing population, stagnating population health and continued high levels of inequality, the spotlight is once again falling on Russia's marginalised sub-groups and those most vulnerable in the face of economic decay.

Russia's middle-age males represent a population grouping that has suffered extreme and sustained consequences stemming from the 'transition' out of communism, including chronic and multiple morbidities and premature mortality. These Russian males have consistently fared considerably worse than their

female counterparts as well as equivalent males in post-communist countries.

The figures below depict mortality rates by age for females (1a) and males (1b) for a selection of developed countries, along with Russia and Ukraine from the post-communist region. For developed countries, mortality rates are low at all ages, until they gradually start to increase around 70-75 years, and then increase sharply among the over 80s. This profile describes all developed countries, for both females and males.

For Russia (and Ukraine to a lesser extent) the story is different. Female mortality patterns are similar but with higher death rates across the age range and therefore a slightly less steep incline at the older ages. For males, not only are mortality rates 400-700% higher for working age males, but deaths peak for them in their 50s, prior to declining among the elderly. This represents a remarkable and sustained difference in



## Russian demographics

the pattern and magnitude of health outcomes for working age Russian males. In fact, over several decades, this group has been consistently drinking, smoking, committing suicide, succumbing to work place and road traffic accidents and neglecting diet and exercise in far greater numbers and cost than any other population group in Russia, or indeed elsewhere. In the remainder of this essay we explore these unhealthy and seemingly unhappy lives in more detail.

We start by examining the material living conditions that Russians find themselves in. The average monthly household income in Russia is low (50,000 rubles in 2015 equated to approximately \$850), but is particularly low among the middle-aged population. More than two-thirds of Russians say that they would not be able realistically to survive for more than two weeks if they were deprived of income. Around 5-6% of middle-aged Russians live in households in which necessary medicine has had to be sacrificed due to financial constraints and a little over 2% report having had to miss clinical and hospital care. In a country in which health care is guaranteed to all citizens through the constitution, these numbers are indicative of serious constraints facing Russian households.

The starkest insight into the real material conditions that shape the lives of many Russians comes from the information on household assets. There are 13.8% (11.1%) of middle-aged males (females) living in households without a central water supply; 42.1% (36.8%) living without a supply of hot water; 37.4% (30.3%) living without a central sewage system; and a little over one-third of households are without refrigeration. Among potentially less 'basic' items, 28.4% (27.2%) live in households with no microwave; 15.2% (14.9%) do not have a washing machine in their residence; and 31.6% (29.8%) have no internet connection.

Against such a background of deprivation and relative hardship, it comes as no surprise to find widespread evidence of unhealthy behaviours among middle-aged Russians. The evidence concerning tobacco and alcohol consumption of middle-aged males is particularly striking. These males drink significantly more than both their younger male counterparts or the corresponding group of middle-aged females. Moreover, they have the more 'dangerous' drinking patterns in terms of consuming homemade liquor and vodka and participation in 'park' and 'street' drinking. Meanwhile, more than 50% of middle-aged males report themselves as smokers, compared to less than 15% of middle-aged females.

The empirical evidence is clear. There is widespread material deprivation in Russia and it disproportionately impacts the middle-aged, giving rise to a set of health behaviors and profiles that are particularly worrisome for Russia's middle-aged males. To really understand the reasons for this though we must examine the labour market, the traditions of the Russian household and the interaction between the two.

Driven by a radical transformation in the industrial landscape, the Russian labour market has undergone seismic changes during the past 25 years and now bears little resemblance to

the Soviet model. While a small section of the highly skilled workforce has prospered in the energy and natural resource sector the remaining majority have been faced with the option of either seeking employment in alternative sectors, requiring different or lower skills and extensive retraining, or relocating to more prosperous areas, or accepting wage arrears, payments-in-kind, unpaid leave and part-time hours.

There is no real tradition of lifelong learning or professional development in Russia and so retraining options are limited. Relocation is not a panacea either; outside of the metropolis areas of Moscow and St. Petersburg, opportunities are in short supply. Moreover, relocation involves abandoning the welfare services (housing, kindergarten, healthcare, subsidised meals) that remain linked to the enterprise, particularly in large single-company towns (e.g. the car company AvtoVaz in Tolyatti, Samara, continues to sustain over 30,000 employees through its enterprise housing and related services). Unfortunately, unpaid wages and shorter hours are a more likely reality. In 2015-16, significant increases in unpaid wages and part-time employment were recorded in Samara, Tver, Ivanovo and Ulyanovsk – regions with high concentrations of workers in the transport sector.

The problems facing males have been further compounded by a household dynamic which serves to marginalise them in their domestic environments. Males unable to fulfil the perceived primary breadwinner role find little scope for defining new roles within a domestic sphere in which social reproduction remains principally matrifocal, with family life largely operating through a cross-generational sharing of responsibilities and duties among women. For a significant number of middle-aged males therefore, the outlook is demoralising. Men who are unemployed, underemployed or earning too little, cede their main household-based identity as the breadwinner. In addition to their exclusion from the labour market, they face either symbolic or actual exclusion from their own household. For most urban men, there is little chance of forging an alternative masculine role within the household and, with underdeveloped leisure facilities and little by way of civil society, there are also limited options for identifying meaning outside of work or the home. For these men, already with lower socioeconomic status, the result often takes the form of a downward spiral into psychological and physical ill-health, compounded by alcoholism. Indeed, the misuse and abuse of alcohol are most common among those suffering unemployment, downward wage flexibility, and marital breakdown.

The evidence is clear. Among middle-aged men: the disappearance of the social workplace oriented bonds of their earlier working years; their growing instability in and unsuitability for productive employment; and the knock-on effects that this has on family life and masculine identity combine to provide for a powerful explanation of the escalating alcohol misuse and abuse which defines the lives – and deaths – of large numbers of middle-aged Russian males. Many have literally vanished, in that they have succumbed to early mortality, while many that remain are or feel themselves to be unseen and unheard.

While there are no nationally coordinated policies aimed specifically at this sub-group, there are a growing number of regional-level governmental and non-governmental initiatives which address male-specific ‘problems’ across the younger and middle-age years. The most well-known, and long-standing, among these is the ‘Regional Crisis Centre for Men’, located in Barnaul, Altai Krai, which has operated since 1995. The Centre’s own publicity explains that the myth of the ‘strong man’ that pervades Russian society serves only to ‘aggravate’ the man’s emotional state if not immediately successful in resolving problems. An emphasis on ‘fatherhood’ as the vehicle for male identity through which to target males seems to be ubiquitous in both regional and cross-regional initiatives. In

Arkhangelsk, a project called ‘Dad School’, based on the Crisis Centre ‘Nadezhda’ (‘Hope’), organises a ‘man club’ for fathers to share experiences of parenting. In a similar vein, ‘Papaland’ collects cross-regional information relating to fatherhood, including events, relevant literature, and related information and advice. Other male-oriented organisations and support services, including the ‘Association of Fathers’, and ‘Man of the XXI Century’ have also emerged, and sometimes disappeared, targeting specific elements of male life. These initiatives are couched within the framework of the family, and the male specificity refers principally to the role of man as father, in the context of the family. To this extent, it reflects that traditional values are, perhaps increasingly, significant in Russian society.

## ‘Russia: The Power of a Narrative’

### The BEARR Trust Annual Lecture 2017

**H**ow important is a powerful ‘narrative’ in shaping political reality, and how is it created? At a time when strong overarching messages often seem to count for more than the facts, the BEARR Trust invited Arkady Ostrovsky to give this year’s Annual Lecture, held on 26 June and again hosted by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, on the ‘Power of a Narrative’ in Russia.

Arkady Ostrovsky is well qualified to comment on the evolution of Russian media and politics. Currently the Russia and Eastern Europe editor of *The Economist*, he won the Orwell Prize in 2016 for *The Invention of Russia: The Journey from Gorbachev’s Freedom to Putin’s War*. This chronicled Russia’s post-Soviet transformation through the power of PR, television and the press in ‘inventing’ reality through a strong narrative: a story that people believe in.

The battle to control the narrative was fought from the collapse of the Soviet Union, with a liberal narrative initially powerful. The symbolism of Yeltsin defending the White House as a ‘Russian’ voice of freedom against the ‘Soviet’ leaders of the 1991 putsch was a powerful one; two years later, the media played a vital role in explaining the shelling of the same White House as a battle between a president on the side of freedom and a reactionary parliament. At the time, the dominant narrative saw Russia as on a process of ‘transition’, from a ‘corrupt gerontocracy’ towards something ‘liberal’, ‘normal’ and ‘Western’, with capitalist economics leading to liberal politics (or the other way round). The reality might not have quite matched up to the narrative, but enough people believed in it to give it political traction.

Developing the liberal narrative involved inventing some history to create a new present. In 1991, a number of young journalists launched *Kommersant*, intended to be Moscow’s answer to the *Wall Street Journal*. This was to be a new newspaper for a new class of readers in a brand new market. But the founders took the title from a small-circulation pre-revolutionary paper,

closed down in 1917. The masthead stated (and still states) that the newspaper was founded in 1909 and ‘was not published in 1917-91 for reasons beyond editorial control’. The statement was an important representation of the dominant narrative, demonstrating the irrelevance of the communist period: a gap between a capitalist past and a capitalist future. *Kommersant* may have been new, but it gave the impression of continuity; Russia may not have been capitalist, but it had a capitalist newspaper.



Media creation of reality played a strong role in electoral politics as well. By 1996, Yeltsin was frequently in poor health, confined to his private residence and somewhat different from the dynamic figure of 1991. Faced with the threat of a victory by communist candidate Gennady Zyuganov or the instability likely to be caused by cancelled elections, the two biggest rivals in broadcast media, Boris Berezovsky at Channel One and Vladimir Gusinsky at NTV, put aside their differences to campaign for a Yeltsin victory. Controlling the narrative through television not only secured Yeltsin’s second term – it guaranteed the oligarchs’ commercial interests and power in the Kremlin as well.

## Annual Lecture 2017

However, by 1998, an alternative narrative was emerging. As the 1998 default soured the promise of capitalist economic growth, the 1999 NATO bombing of Serbia fed anti-American sentiment, and Yeltsin's health worsened, those in control of the media looked for a 'strong and sober' leader. Vladimir Putin was, in Arkady Ostrovsky's words, 'constructed' by the media, seeing him as a reliable guarantor of the oligarchs' interests. His media image invented in contrast to Yeltsin's chaos and drunkenness, the 'inventors' of Putin also looked back to an older Soviet narrative. In 1998, NTV ran a re-make of *Seventeen Moments of Spring*, a 1970s TV spy series about a Soviet agent in Nazi Germany, the epitome of the 'strong and sober' leader. Months earlier, Putin (a former KGB officer in East Germany) had been appointed the head of its successor the FSB; a year later he was Prime Minister.

Over time, the nationalist narrative has strengthened, as the state has increased its direct hold on broadcast media, and in



many cases co-opted former liberal journalists and broadcasters. The news agenda has also been powerfully used to reinforce it. While for many liberals, Pussy Riot might be champions of free expression against an authoritarian regime, in the nationalist narrative they are 'rootless cosmopolitans' damaging the institutions of tradition and the state. As in other countries, 'cultural wedge' issues are a powerful force. By 2014, the narrative of a strong, nationalist Russia looking out not just for its own interests but for those of 'Russians' beyond its post-Soviet borders was being used to much effect in Ukraine.

Yet a narrative only has power if people (want to) believe in it. Recent protests in Russia suggest that the Putin narrative might be losing some of its traction: while in previous years, the protest movement has been largely metropolitan, protests earlier this year drew from a wider cross-section of society. For the first time, the Kremlin seems to have been 'behind the curve' in responding to popular challenge. More generally, the universal reach of network television is fading, as younger people increasingly get their news online or via social media; over time, fewer voters remember (or care about) the collapse of the 1990s to which the Putin's 'restorationism' was supposed to be the antidote.



What is tomorrow's dominant narrative likely to be? Opposition leader Alexei Navalny strikes a nationalist tone, although from an isolationist rather than imperialist perspective: opposed to immigration, anti-corruption and uninterested in assuming the burdens of the old Soviet empire. According to Arkady Ostrovsky, Navalny is 'almost the new Putin', and the symbolism of a new generation taking over from the old is striking. But in a highly personalistic system, how the transition from one generation to the next (or from one narrative to the next) will take place is very uncertain.

Finally, and looking beyond Russia, the West had a powerful narrative in 1991: the strength of the pro-Western narrative in the early 1990s rested on liberalism's moral, as well as material value. But the 'morality' of the West seems to have lost much of its traction. If in Putin's view, traditional Russian values are superior, they are to Navalny at least no worse.

### Ross Gill BEARR Trustee

The BEARR Trust is as ever grateful to EBRD for hosting and sponsoring the lecture. Further photos of the event taken by Anna Lukanina-Morgan can be seen at

<https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B5zifuHIP6taW1WWHRwRy1iYm8>



# Project Reports: Vulnerable older people in Russia

## Help Line brings a ray of sunshine to our elderly people

### Grantee: Solnechny Den (Sunny Day), Chelyabinsk

**O**ur Sunshine Help Line project was a wonderful source of support for many people during the four months it operated with funding from The BEARR Trust. Between September and December 2016 the phone line received 121 calls. Below is an outline of the kind of appeals we received during that period and the ways in which we, together with the BEARR Trust, were able to respond to them.

We take all kinds of calls. For example, elderly people ring up to ask for the telephone number of a local surgery or welfare organisation, or they may want the number of a lawyer who can offer free legal advice or the number of a particular shop or pharmacy. We also receive a large number of requests for practical assistance from our team of volunteers. Their help includes cleaning houses and windows, gardening, taking people to the shops or surgery or out for a walk. Sometimes people just call for someone to talk to; they want to discuss their problems with their relatives or neighbours. In these situations it is often enough to offer a listening ear as many people are simply lacking human contact.

Below are a few examples of the support that our volunteers have given.

A young man named Denis helped Anna to clean her windows. Anna approached us for help as she has cerebral palsy and finds it terribly difficult to clean her windows herself.

Kirill, Sergei and Konstantin put their strength to good use helping Valentina Ivanovna, a grandmother from Yuzhnouralsk, to tidy up her vegetable patch.

However, some of the appeals we receive require more urgent action; when people are suddenly faced with real hardship, alone on the streets, without sufficient money for food or medicine or incapable of accessing the support they need to get back on their feet. That is when they turn to us. We continue



to provide food parcels to the families we mentor on a monthly basis. We have seven families caring for elderly or disabled relatives who are in desperate need.

In addition, we supply medicine, equipment for rehabilitation and other kinds of humanitarian aid. We have purchased specially adapted wheelchairs, a support corset for a disabled boy, medical test-strips, incontinence pads for a severe diabetic and many other products.

We received a call for help from a grandmother who is the sole carer of her two granddaughters, one of whom has Down's Syndrome. She approached us for help with food and medicine. Our organisation now delivers food parcels to the family on a regular basis.



In October 2016 Lyubov Vladimirovna, an elderly disabled woman from the village of Bukharino in the Chelyabinsk region, contacted us. Lyubov is paralysed below the waist as the result of a stroke she suffered many years ago. She is a very attractive, sociable and kind woman living with her son, her daughter-in-law and three young grandchildren, the youngest just turned three.

Lyubov's son, Vadim, was hit by a car two years ago in the freezing cold winter. The people responsible for the accident fled the scene and Vadim was left with severe frostbite. Vadim learned to walk with prosthetics and even managed to find part-time security work at a local mine until his car broke down.

We now supply food to the family every month and we were recently able to acquire a specially adapted wheelchair for Lyubov Vladimirovna, who had been unable to leave her bed for many years. She was absolutely delighted. Her next challenge is to learn to move herself from her bed to her wheelchair while her son, Vadim, is currently devising a plan to build a decent ramp between their house and garden and the road.

Pictured overleaf is the wheelchair we donated to a 16-year-old girl we began mentoring in October. Her family, who have several children, contacted us when they were unable to obtain

## Project report: Decent jobs for IDP women in Ukraine

a wheelchair for her. The girl lives in the village of Fedorovka but her wheelchair was transported all the way from Snezhinsk by some wonderfully kind people.

And the photo on the back cover was taken of the New Year celebrations that we laid on for our care homes in December 2016. Our residents were delighted to receive gifts and enjoyed our New Year concert.

In addition to all these projects, we continue to visit numerous nursing homes for the elderly and disabled, and put on concerts for them. Recently we have begun to support the Centre for Complex Social Care in their work to protect the homeless. So far we have made three visits and donated food and clothing for people living at the centre.

In July 2017 our Sunshine Help Line received financial support from the charitable foundation run by Yelena and Gennady Timchenko. We are thrilled that our project continues to grow every month, allowing us to provide support to an increasing number of people.



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## Project reports: Skills training for refugees Decent jobs for internally displaced women in Ukraine

### Grantee: SOS Children's Villages, Ukraine, with Kyivo-Svyatoshin District Center of Social Service for Families, Children and Youth

**I**n times of crisis when you cannot stay in your motherland and continue your stable life, the only way is to flee to another location to feel safer and more secure. But feeling safer means having a house, a job, education for your children. If you are an internally displaced woman with kids, is there a way to achieve a settled life?

SOS Children's Villages Ukraine, with support from The BEARR Trust, initiated a 6-month project aiming to help 20 unemployed women, representatives of internally displaced families with children in crisis, to give them the knowledge and skills needed for employment, to make them aware of the services available from public institutions and organisations, and to build their IT skills to enhance their competitiveness in the labour market.

The aim was ambitious enough, as the majority of the project beneficiaries were raising children of preschool and primary school age who were often sick, which made it hard for the women to compete in the search for jobs. Moreover, the majority of the participants had graduated more than 10 years earlier and were not doing work relevant to their qualifications.

The long-term objective of the project was to encourage employment and income-generating activities among internally displaced people, and to enable them to settle better in their new community, to benefit their vulnerable children.



## Project report: Decent jobs for IDP women in Ukraine

During the course of their training, the women shared their skills, achievements and past successes, which made it possible for other participants to develop areas of activity that had previously been undeveloped. In the warm atmosphere of the course, each had the opportunity to share her plans for the future without fear of judgment, and with support and advice.

As a result of the project, the participants are familiar with the characteristics of the labour market in Kievo-Svyatoshinsky district and the requirements to take on professional work. They can use a computer, can present themselves to prospective employers on the basis of their strengths, have experience of job interviews and comprehensive knowledge of Ukrainian business language, and can present themselves appropriately (make-up, hair style, business clothes). Participants are able to use mediation techniques in job-hunting and in the course of employment and adaptation. They possess the skills of non-violent communication and are able to use them during job interviews, as well as in the process of communication with colleagues and management.

Despite the smooth running of the project we still faced some difficulties, but we managed to overcome them. The first obstacle was when children of preschool and early school age had to come to training sessions with their mothers because of the overcrowding in kindergartens. So a child-friendly space was established right next to the classroom, where SOS's specialists ran activities for kids. The second issue related to psychological issues affecting the participants. Women who have experienced displacement, loss of their homes and life-threatening circumstances had difficulties in adapting and communicating, and at the beginning of the training course were too reserved, afraid to ask questions, and unable to decide what was really important to them or what kind of activities to choose in future. To remedy this, the project specialists all made a great effort to create a friendly and secure environment. Being close to the children also contributed to this.

### **You just need to set out on the path – this is proven by our success stories:**

Galyna has two children. She sews clothes for her children herself. But it was only in the course of training that she realised that she could earn money by making bags for sale. Her first customers were participants in the project and project trainers.

Anna and Anastasia had experience in the preparation of pastries, so they decided to engage professionally in cooking and to bake pastries for sale. At the end of the project they received electric ovens to enable them to do this.

Olesia expressed a desire to learn something completely new – nail styling, and at the end of the project she received tools for manicure. She sees her future in this profession.

Veronica and Inna found online jobs connected with website content management, so they received professional memory drives needed for any IT job.

The main result of the project was a huge boost to the women's motivation to embark on a new stage in their lives where anything is possible!



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Photos all taken by SOS staff



SOME OF THE BEAUTIFUL  
 CRAFTS PRODUCED BY  
 PARTICIPANTS AT SOS

# Agribusiness for displaced persons in Tajikistan

## Grantee: NGO Elyor in Shaartuz district, Tajikistan

**A**t Elyor, we used our grant successfully to help IDPs adapt to their new living conditions and find work by helping them to set up their own small businesses in the agricultural sector. This will ensure not only that they and their families have an income but also that new jobs are created for all local inhabitants. The IDPs attended training courses and gained practical experience in farming in the fields and in greenhouses, growing cucumbers, tomatoes, citrus fruit, radishes and green vegetables. They also attended a course in setting up a small business, after which 30% of the participants started up their own enterprise.

The participants told us that this was the first time since they left their homes that they had received any help like this. We told them about our organisation and how we received the funds for the project from The BEARR Trust, as part of a grant scheme to help refugees and IDPs to settle in their new homes.

The project comprised five training events, and all the seminars were attended by representatives of local government and an agronomist from the local agricultural authority, Kholboyev Yoron. The latter explained planting techniques and how to choose the best piece of land to plant in so as to achieve the best harvest from the seeds sown. They also learned how to build their own greenhouses.

We are grateful to The BEARR Trust for the grant, which allowed us to help people who had left mountainous regions where they were only able to engage in small-scale horticulture. It helped them to adapt to their new conditions. We also wrote a manual on the greenhouse cultivation of tomatoes and cucumbers and distributed it to them.

We have seen the first results of our project. The community elder had started to build a cowshed for his village, but after our project he decided to turn it into a greenhouse. So our trainer, Saidov Radzhabali, showed him how to go about it. By December they were all busy working in their plots and fields, planting leeks, beets, carrots and so on.

The village of Kholyorobod was named after the head of the district. We asked him how he found the place. He said that six years ago he had gathered his fellow displaced people, moved them to this steppe region and they started to settle here. They still live like one family, with no fences around their houses. There were no organisations or enterprises to help them and only the land to feed them.

A woman named Dilafruz formed a brigade with 30 women and they work together on private farms, helping each other in a way you don't see in other villages. They came from different



places but have merged into one unit. We were impressed by how they solved their problems together. Their streets are not asphalted, but made of sand, they use shrubs instead of posts along the roadside, ditches instead of troughs, wattle and daub instead of bricks, and they live contentedly. No-one looks down on them. The head of the village says that another hundred families have decided to come and live here soon, and they are sure that gradually everything they need will be available, although now they still have to travel six kilometres to the next village to school and for medical care.

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# Beekeeping for Syrian refugees

## Grantee: Improve Our Village NGO, Armenia

**M**ore than 20,000 refugees from Syria have sought safety in Armenia, one of Europe's leading destinations for these refugees, in proportion to its small population.

The Armenian migration service has settled many of the refugees in rural regions, including in the villages of Kotaik region. This is one of the regions in Armenia where refugees can live and find work in jobs similar to those they had before. The government and civil society are keen for them to integrate smoothly and have developed programmes to help with this. All the projects require expansion of services and infrastructure and the Syrian refugees are able to become involved in that.

The government's role is to explain to them the advantages of settling in particular regions where jobs are available and where there is housing. Civil society, meanwhile, tries to help them integrate into society. For those refugees who have come to villages in Kotaik region, the NGO Improve Our Village, with a small grant from the BEARR Trust, has developed and implemented a beekeeping project as a means of helping refugees to integrate quickly.



The beneficiaries were 50 young women from Syrian families who had an interest in agriculture and wanted to learn about beekeeping. They were given theoretical and practical training, the latter taking place at the well-known beekeeping centre 'Multi Agro'. They were instructed by volunteers, students and teachers from the state agricultural college. At the end they received certificates. Forty-five of them developed business plans, and some of them were able to buy beehives using funds from the Agricol Bank.

The results are clear: in spring 2017, 13 participants in the project obtained beehives and started looking after bees, setting up their own small enterprise. They also began teaching their neighbours about beekeeping and produced a textbook. There has been considerable interest in the project and we have

received a proposal to implement the programme in several other regions.

This year our organisation was awarded a prize as the best NGO in the region!

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## Contact

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Photos: Mariam Avetisyan



# Making useful, beautiful things!

## Grantee: Women's Perspectives, Lviv, Ukraine

**If you visit the workshop where the handicrafts woodworkers are busy making garden furniture you will see benches, tables, chairs, shelves and plant tubs based on unique artistic designs. These beautiful, artistic and high quality items are made to spend many years adorning people's gardens or interiors.**

Other types of handicrafts made by this organisation are items of beauty and fashion, using traditional and modern techniques, accessories, decorations made from felted wool, and amazing scarves, hats, headscarves and bags. All of this is made by hand, by men and women whose work is imbued with love and warmth.

The idea of setting up a social enterprise came from Lyubov Maksymovych. She has been chairman of the NGOs The Centre and Women's Perspectives for many years. During a visit abroad she saw an enterprise which specialised in handicrafts made in many countries of the world. She immediately thought 'Why don't we organise it so that we make the handicrafts and teach the necessary skills in one place?' The idea gradually took hold and simply needed the right moment for launching.

The NGO's target beneficiaries are victims of domestic violence and people-trafficking, socially disadvantaged people, including internally displaced people (IDPs), and families of soldiers fighting in eastern Ukraine. During its existence, The Centre has implemented more than 30 different projects, providing direct assistance to more than 5,000 people. The NGO conducts regular social surveys of various kinds, cooperates actively with local government, and provides legal, educational and information assistance to various target groups. It also provides training and vocational courses.

The team working for Women's Perspectives, headed by Lyubov Maksymovych and the artistic director of the future Handicrafts social enterprise, Lviv sculptress and artist Natalya Leykina, worked up the design for the enterprise's activity. In the summer of 2015 the social enterprise Handicrafts was established. From the beginning the enterprise had the aim of helping people in difficult circumstances. But in 2014 new challenges appeared, in that a number of IDPs

who had arrived in Lviv were having difficulty finding work. One of the first waves of IDPs arriving in Lviv discovered the vocational training courses organised by our social enterprise and stayed with us. But they needed not only work but support. When they started learning with us, they gradually thawed out and started to smile. They enjoyed mastering new techniques, discovering their talent and improving their skills. Later came the first handicraft fairs, the first fans of their products, the first buyers and orderers. In parallel, a workshop got under way for wood-working and speed-carving using electrical and petrol driven wood-carving machines. Sculptress Natalya Leykina eagerly shared with participants in her training sessions the secrets of wood-cutting work and the creation of designs for unique products. Now the workshop is moving into a new area – small series production of domestic furniture such as sofas, chests of drawers, candle holders and other decorative items.

Now the workshop for making items out of felted wool and painting on fabric has moved into a spacious and comfortable workspace. The number of women working there is growing. Although the skills training provided does not automatically lead to a job in the enterprise, everyone who wants to can stay and continue with us. The enterprise is open to anyone who wants to share in its activities. The women assure us that they feel really comfortable here. And for some of them, working in this project has become a safety net.

*The Women's Perspectives Centre was registered as a social enterprise on 6 April 1998. The organisation's mission is to defend the rights of women and promote equal rights and opportunities for both men and women in all spheres of social life. The organisation's activities aim to promote the fulfilment of gender policies in Ukraine, to reduce the level of violence, raise the competitiveness of women in the labour market, and advocate for them in decision-making in Ukraine.*

## Contact

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SOME OF THE STUNNING, ORIGINAL DESIGNS

# BEARR Trust Annual Conference 2017 'HIV/AIDS in the BEARR Region'

The BEARR Trust will hold its annual conference this year at its own premises in Southwark, London, on Friday 10 November. The conference will discuss current trends and the factors behind them, official policy responses, dealing with stigma and raising public awareness, and the need for and availability of intervention and support, especially from NGOs and civil society generally.

Speakers will include

- Dr Ulla Pape, University of Bremen, Germany
- Dr Charles Ssonko, Médecins Sans Frontières, London
- Dr Peter Meylakhs, Associate Professor, Centre for Health Economics, Higher School of Economics, St. Petersburg
- Dr Sergii Dvoryak, Senior Scientist, Institute on Public Health Policy, Ukraine

- Oxana Buzovici, Union of HIV Prevention and Harm Reduction (UORN), Moldova
- Dr Jill Owczarzak, Assistant Professor, Department of Health, Behavior, and Society, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, Baltimore, Maryland.
- Yelena Rastokina, Kazakhstan Union of People Living with HIV

We also hope to have speakers from NGOs in the South Caucasus.

Further details of the programme and how to book will be available shortly at <http://www.bearr.org/bearr-trust-annual-conference-2017-hiv-aids-in-the-bearr-region>

## Information and Administration Officer



Congratulations to **Anna Lukanina-Morgan** and her husband Ian on the birth of their daughter Alexandra on 26 August, and all good wishes for the family's future. We hope to see Anna back at BEARR in due course.

**Tatiana Mordvinova** has taken over as maternity cover for Anna following an open process which attracted many excellent applications but in which she emerged the strongest candidate. She has been volunteering for BEARR

for the last three years, notably as a brilliant interpreter at our annual conferences.

Tatiana has a first degree in Literature and Human Rights from St Petersburg State University and a Masters in Education from the Open University. She has lived in the UK for the last ten years and worked for an international education company for six years in different roles, including as a Student Support Manager on an MBA distance learning programme, before going on maternity leave. For the last three years she has worked as a secretary for a family company.



### Tbilisi Conference

Some readers may recall that in our last issue we reported that we were planning a conference in Tbilisi in May 2017 in partnership with Ilia State University. Unfortunately, despite the best efforts of both parties, this has not proved practicable at the present time.

### Become a Friend of BEARR

**Support BEARR's work in health and welfare, get a personal copy of this Newsletter regularly and receive details of all BEARR's activities and other items of interest by becoming a Friend of The BEARR Trust. Your subscription (£30 minimum) will support BEARR's activities throughout the coming year.**

Write to [info@bearr.org](mailto:info@bearr.org) for a Friends application form or make a single donation by clicking the '[Donate Today](#)' button, bottom left of our home page.

## New Chairman-designate of the BEARR Trust

After six years as Chairman of the BEARR Trust, Robert Brinkley will step down in June 2018. The Trustees have chosen Nicola Ramsden to succeed him. Until then, Nicola will be Deputy Chairman.

Nicola Ramsden has been a BEARR trustee since 1997. She has worked for the Bank of England and NatWest Investment Bank and has an MBA from the London Business School. From 1992 to 1997 she worked in Moscow as a consultant for Deloitte and Touche, and became the first President of the charity Action for Russia's Children. Nicola is also a director and trustee of the Monteverdi Choir and Orchestras. She is married with a daughter.

Nicola says: 'I'm honoured to be appointed Deputy Chairman of The BEARR Trust, a charity with which I've been involved for over twenty years. BEARR has gone from strength to strength under Robert Brinkley's leadership, and I look forward to succeeding Robert as Chairman next year.'



## New BEARR Trustees

BEARR is delighted to welcome two new Trustees, who will bring additional wide-ranging experience and expertise to our activities.

### Charlie Walker

Charlie Walker is Associate Professor of Sociology at the University of Southampton, and an Honorary Member of the Centre for Russian, European and Eurasian Studies at the University of Birmingham. He was previously a Postdoctoral Research Fellow at St Antony's, University of Oxford.

Charlie's research has explored class, gender and spatial (rural-urban) inequalities in Russia, focusing on young people's transitions to adulthood and, more recently, men's wellbeing. He has recently worked for the World Bank on a project examining processes of social exclusion amongst vulnerable groups in Russia, and in 2018-19 will be working on a British Academy funded project looking at transition to adulthood



amongst care leavers in the Leningrad region. The latter project will involve working closely with Russian NGOs providing aftercare services to care leavers. The need better to integrate academic and third sector activities is one of the reasons Charlie wanted to begin working with BEARR.

### Biljana Radonjic Ker-Lindsay

Biljana Radonjic Ker-Lindsay has 15 years of international experience in over 30 emerging markets in Central & Eastern Europe, CIS and North Africa, developing and managing multinational teams at the intersection between governments, businesses and civil society. As the head of the Civil Society Engagement (CSE) Unit at the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), Biljana advises senior management, Board of Directors and relevant teams on civil society issues in EBRD projects, strategies and policies; and oversees the Bank's on-going outreach, dialogue and consultations with civil society. She is leading her team's management of technical cooperation funds aimed at enhancing capacity of local community groups and grassroots civil society organisations.

Before joining the EBRD in 2006, Biljana co-founded and ran Civillitas Research, an independent strategic consultancy and think tank dedicated to socio-political and business research in South East Europe and the Eastern Mediterranean, based out of Cyprus. Biljana's focus has been the development agenda particularly related to the financing of sustainable and inclusive economic development, gender equality, social entrepreneurship, youth and rural employment and disability related issues.



## New BEARR volunteers

**BEARR is delighted to welcome several volunteers who have come forward recently offering to help with our various activities. The new recruits will mainly be involved in translating, interpreting and research.**

**Charlotte Bull.** Charlotte spent a year volunteering with the NGO Lastochki in Samara as part of her degree courses, and remains active in various civic initiatives across the region.

**Janice Giffen.** Janice started out researching debates about economic planning in the Soviet Union, then spent the next 30 years working with the NGO sector in both the FSU and other parts of the world.

**Irena Maryniak.** Irena was East European Editor for Index on Censorship (1988-2006) before turning to teaching and freelance work as a translator and writer.

**Sue Judge.** Sue, a Russian graduate with many years' experience of working with Russia and other FSU countries, currently teaches at the UK's first bilingual Russian-English school in West London.

**Marian Uberi.** Mariam is a human rights defender and is passionate about social justice including health and welfare issues.

*We are greatly indebted to all our volunteers, and extremely grateful for all they do.*

Find us on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/BearrTrust>



and on Twitter: [@BEARRTweets](https://twitter.com/BEARRTweets)



and of course on our website

[www.bearr.org](http://www.bearr.org)



## About the BEARR Trust

Patrons: The Duchess of Abercorn, Vladimir Ashkenazy, Elena Bashkurova Barenboim, Lady Ellen Dahrendorf, Myra Green OBE, Bridget Kendall MBE, Sir Roderic Lyne KBE CMG, Sir Jonathan Miller CBE, Mike Simmonds, Rair Simonyan, Dr Robert van Voren, PhD, FRCPsych (Hon), Sir Andrew Wood GCMG

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 Eastern Europe, Russia, Central Asia and the 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.

Trustees: Andrea Bennett, Robert Brinkley (Chairman), Megan Bick, Ross Gill, Janet Gunn, Marcia Levy, Ann Lewis, Biljana Radonjic Ker-Lindsay, Nicola Ramsden (Deputy Chairman), Michael Rasell, Charlie Walker

Hon Treasurer: Carolyn Davis

Information Officer: Anna Lukanina-Morgan; maternity cover from July 2017 Tatiana Mordvinova

Moscow Rep: Igor Timoshin

Volunteers: Lucy Buckland, Charlotte Bull, Janice Giffen, Neil Hailey, Sue Judge, Antony Lewis, Irena Maryniak, Zoryana Mishchik, Malcolm Mowat, Mariam Uberi, Sabrina Vashisht

Newsletter: Editor: Ann Lewis; layout: Leila Carlyle

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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SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGES



WOMEN'S PERSPECTIVES



IMPROVE OUR VILLAGE NGO



WOMEN'S PERSPECTIVES



SOLNECHNY DEN



NGO ELYOR

PEOPLE AND PRODUCTS INVOLVED IN PROJECTS SUPPORTED UNDER THE BEARR TRUST'S SMALL GRANTS SCHEME, TO PROVIDE SKILLS TRAINING TO INTERNALLY DISPLACED PEOPLE IN UKRAINE, ARMENIA AND TAJIKISTAN, TO HELP THEM TO BE SELF-SUPPORTING AND AID THEIR INTEGRATION INTO THEIR LOCAL COMMUNITIES.