

The BEARR Trust
20th Anniversary
Conference: 'So much,
so little: progress and
prospects in health,
welfare and the role
of NGOs'

BEARR Trust Small
Grants Scheme:

- 2012 call for bids
- Project reports:
 - Rehabilitation of
young offenders in
Archangelsk
 - Help for young people
with mental health
problems in Kazakhstan

Country profile: Georgia

NGO focus:
STAND International

Development of NGOs
in Belarus

GB–Russia Society lectures

Russian internships

Trustees' News



Above: STAND International volunteers at an orphanage in Belarus (see page 11).

The BEARR Trust Small Grants Scheme 2012

The BEARR Trust is pleased to announce its Small Grants Scheme for 2012 and invites applications from NGOs and other organisations. Full details are given below. The deadline is 4 February 2012.

Section A: A sum of \$10 000 to be awarded for projects in Russia and Kazakhstan which encourage youth volunteering as a way of integrating young people more fully into wider society.

Section B: A sum of £5000 for innovative work with elderly people in Ukraine, Moldova or Belarus .

The Trust may wish to support more than one initiative through the scheme, so proposals within the range \$1000–5000 or £1000–5000 are requested. Awards will be made on a matching basis, and not exceed 50% of the overall cost of a proposal

What are the aims of the Scheme?

The 2012 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, influence policy, or engage public institutions in addressing the relevant issues
- propose other, imaginative, ways of achieving the Scheme's aims

The scheme is intended to further the BEARR Trust's current priorities, which can be seen at: <http://www.bearr.org/en/node/31/> or <http://www.bearr.org/ru/node/275>.

Who can apply for the grants?

The scheme is open to applications from NGOs and other organisations active in the countries covered by the Small Grants Scheme 2012. (Section A: Russia or Kazakhstan, Section B: Ukraine, Belarus or Moldova).

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 4 February 2012.

The application should be no more than 2 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.
- Why the NGO needs a grant from The BEARR Trust and what it will be used for.
- How this work fits in with your organisation's current activities and how it meets BEARR's priorities.
- 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 2 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 2012. Trustees will review shortlisted proposals at their meeting in early April 2012. 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 the application has been awarded a grant or not.

Section A of The BEARR Trust Small Grants Scheme 2012 is funded by a grant from the Moscow Office of the law firm Baker Botts.

The BEARR Trust Annual Conference, November 2011

‘So much, so little: progress and prospects in health, welfare and the role of NGOs’

Report by Janet Gunn

The theme of this year’s conference was chosen to reflect the 20th anniversary of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the founding of the BEARR Trust. The idea was to assess what had happened over those years in health and social welfare policies in the countries which emerged from the USSR and in the development of the non-governmental and voluntary sectors. BEARR invited speakers from Russia, Ukraine, Georgia and Central Asia, and focused on three fields: families, people with disabilities and the elderly.

The conference was opened by BEARR’s Chairman, Tony Longrigg. He warmly thanked the three sponsors who helped with some of the costs involved: the Great Britain–Russia Society, Age UK, and Ukraine International Airlines; and the organisers and volunteers who made the conference possible.

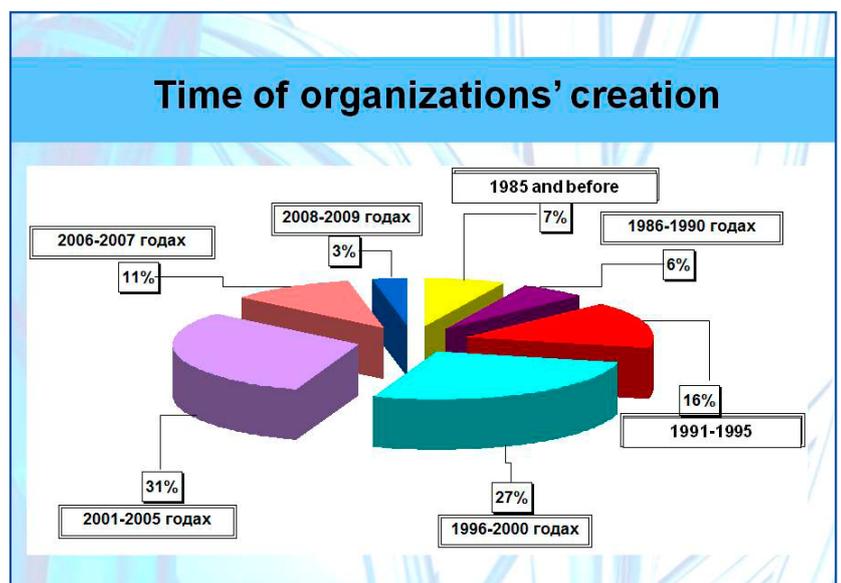
[Alastair McAuley](#), University of Essex, talked about the economic challenges which have faced policymakers in the successor states of the USSR since 1991. By 2006 the long recession they experienced was over in most of the countries concerned, but the recession of 2008 has affected them as well. Using World Bank criteria for poverty levels, he assessed that in 2002 47% of Ukraine’s population lived in poverty, whereas in 2007 only 12% lived at this level. The number has since risen again, however. Mr McAuley said the wealth gap had stopped growing, and a middle class is developing.

After 2000, reform of social welfare began. However, despite increased per capita incomes and a decline in poverty, many people still perceive themselves as worse off than in 1990. This is due to social exclusion. Inflation and unemployment have affected many people. There is inequality between regions and between urban and rural areas. A sharp decline in male life expectancy has not yet been reversed by improvements in healthcare. Meanwhile, healthcare reforms have not resulted in more efficient use of resources, and public dissatisfaction remains widespread. About

50% of the countries of the region have introduced social insurance systems (payroll tax) while the rest retain the old system. Insurance contributions are supplemented by state budget payments and personal (informal) payments for medical services. As for the future, much will depend on the economic situation and institutional reforms.

[Elena Topoleva](#) of the Agency for Social Initiatives (ASI), Moscow gave an overview of developments in the non-governmental sector in Russia. Of 342,000 NGOs that have been established, only about 17,000 are really active. Most NGOs were set up between 1991 and 2005, with a subsequent slowdown, mainly due to the decline in foreign funding over the past 5–6 years. 36% of NGOs are run exclusively by volunteers, but 23% of NGOs use no volunteers at all. In Russia only 3% of the public volunteer. Only 16% of NGO funding comes from government sources. While most NGOs see lack of funding as the main challenge, in reality the main problem is public indifference and lack of trust in NGOs. NGO influence and infrastructure are lower than 15 years ago –because of the fall in foreign funding.

Ms Topoleva described different forms of social involvement: at governmental level, there is the Public



From the presentation by Elena Topoleva

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Chamber, which is controlled by the state but serves as a bridge between the public and the government, providing opportunities for issues to be raised with the government. It has helped to ensure that the legal framework and the taxation of NGOs have improved. At another level there is civic activism, which has been growing but is not institutionalised. Two thirds of people surveyed said they take part in informal activities, but these mainly take place in a parallel universe, and are not coordinated. 50% say they make donations; however, most donations are to individual needy people rather than to NGOs. Only 1–2% of the public donate to NGOs. New legislation provides for this, but NGOs need to explain to people how to donate and claim tax back. Then there are socially-oriented NGOs. The Russian government has begun to fund their work – in 2011 \$30 million will be disbursed. Some of this has been for updating legislation and the regulatory framework, some for professional training and some for the regions by competitive tender. NGOs are becoming interested in selling their services.

Looking at issues affecting families, **Maryna Gutgarts** from Ukraine talked about families with HIV. Ukraine has signed the UN Declaration on HIV/AIDS, but its implementation is patchy. Almost half of those infected with HIV are women, with 6000 new cases among women in 2010, but the state does not do much for the sexual and reproductive health of those concerned. In Ukraine there is no specific action to prevent infection among women; a lack of advice on prevention of infection among women and children; and little effort to prevent mother to child infection. Training of medical staff in the care of people with HIV – some doctors and nurses refuse to treat them – is much needed, and while the international declaration guarantees the right of people with HIV to bear children, in Ukraine health workers often insist on a termination if an HIV positive woman becomes pregnant. It is assessed that 70% of HIV positive people encounter discrimination and denial of their right to healthcare. Many also have to pay more for healthcare.

[Charles Buxton](#) from INTRAC spoke about women in extended families in Central Asia. There, the traditional family structure is under pressure because of the new capitalism, economic pressures and migration, but at the same time there are efforts to resist commercialisation, reassert patriarchy and tradition and revive religion. The Central Asian extended family is really a large joint enterprise. It is crowded, involves complex money and



[Sergej Ljubownikow](#) and [Jo Lucas](#)

non-money transactions (loans, living with relatives in the cities etc.), and nowadays many men work far from home and send money back only sporadically or not at all. For reasons of hierarchy in the family money does not always reach the wife. There has been a recent doubling of the rate of religious marriages, not registered with civil authorities. When this kind of marriage breaks down there is no protection for the woman. Bride kidnapping is re-emerging. The use of contraceptive devices halved between 2000 and 2009. Women have set up self-help groups, some of them involving micro-credit or dealing with domestic violence.

In the session on disability, [Sergej Ljubownikow](#) of Nottingham Trent University analysed three types of NGO in the disability field in Russia. They all engage in advocacy, in the sense of influencing the state elites, as well as advocacy with public opinion, and more or less coincide with the categories described by Elena Topoleva. He called the first group 'marionette' organisations, comprising the regional public chambers, for example, and the All-Russian Organisations of the Disabled, Blind, and Deaf. These are government sponsored, and able to call up officials to deal with individual issues as they are co-located with the relevant social services departments. They take part in consultations on new legislation, which allows the state to say that it has consulted civil society. They provide a cushion for public anger and act as a buffer. Another participant thought the term 'marionette' unjust, since the organisations concerned have a role in delivering services and monitoring government services. Their style is to solve problems piecemeal.

The second category are professional health and social welfare NGOs which learned from and used to be funded by western partners. They now have strong links with countries like Poland. They engage in activities that the state refuses to provide, such as needle exchange. The advocacy they undertake is informing their constituency of their rights. For these NGOs lack of funds rather than government obstruction is the main challenge. They try to access regional funding rather than federal sources.

The third group comprises grass roots NGOs. These are small with limited reach. They address administrative roadblocks and seek to establish relations with state authorities. The 2006 law on NGOs has helped them somewhat but they still find it difficult to secure foreign funding. They are under some pressure not to engage in advocacy. In response to a question the speaker confirmed that they lack capacity for evidence gathering in their field of activity. Both the second and third groups of NGOs employ mainly people with disabilities, which is not the case in the marionette organisations. A downside is that good people in NGOs tend to be enticed into government jobs.

Ana Chakhava from Apra Georgia in Tbilisi talked about art therapy work with people with mental disabilities. Delightful [examples of the artwork](#) and textile handwork produced by people her NGO works with were displayed around the conference room, and a number were bought by participants. The NGO started up in 2005 and has shown work at more than 30 exhibitions. She described the value of art therapy. Apra also comprised a parents' club with 60 members. They join in discussions of mental health reform



Ana Chakhava

and treatment, and exchange experiences, all of which also helps reduce their sense of isolation. With BEARR's help, they are now working in other regions, and art therapy is to be introduced in all mental health facilities in Georgia.



Elizaveta Dzhirikova-Ustinova and Janet Gunn

The final session of the conference focused on the elderly. First, [Elizaveta Dzhirikova-Ustinova](#) from Sostradanie (Compassion) in Moscow described the organisation and its long partnership with BEARR. Sostradanie is one of the oldest NGOs in Russia, and works closely with Memorial, the organisation which researches the repression (Stalinist purges). When the two organisations were first working twenty years ago, there were many survivors of the Gulag still alive. They suffered from ill health, poverty and post-traumatic disorder, and needed help and support. At that time Sostradanie had about 5,000 clients in Moscow and worked with 50 doctors, 50 nurses, and 200 carers. They had psychiatric professionals as well. In the early 90s welfare services were non-existent, and there was no legislation obliging anyone to help people until 1995. The state began by just buying food for elderly people, then started day care centres, and later diabetes and asthma management advice centres. But funding depends on how wealthy the region is, so Moscow can provide a range of services, while poor regions like Smolensk cannot. Social services are still thought by many to be a state responsibility and they resent NGOs being active and especially having services contracted out to them.

In 1996 Ms Dzhirikova met a representative of BEARR, who helped set up an exhibition of artwork by victims of the Gulag. The following year, she attended a BEARR conference – her first ever visit abroad. In 1999 BEARR sent chiropodists to Moscow to teach local people how to care for elderly people's feet. Then they obtained funding for a project to bring together NGOs and state services, and met

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with a group of British specialists to learn from their experience. Some of the lessons from UK experience had to be adapted – for example, she saw how ethnic clubs were organised in Britain, but the risk of nationalism in Russia meant that they established ‘Shared Memory’ clubs for former prisoners of war for example, and professionals’ clubs for former teachers. These clubs plan activities a year in advance – a very positive experience for elderly people. They also founded Rooms for Care – a scheme in which a student or a woman migrant from Central Asia lives in an elderly person’s home in exchange for a certain amount of care. Ms Dzhirikova cited a range of other British experience which had been useful and could be adapted for Russian circumstances. New possibilities include setting up networks such as Age UK in Russia. It is not yet clear what it would focus on in the future but one challenge looming is the move in 2012 to a new healthcare system in which some supplementary or optional services will have to be paid for.

[Galina Poliakova](#) of Turbota pro Litnikh (Age Concern) in Ukraine described how the World Health Organisation visited Ukraine and informed the authorities that an organisation for the elderly should be set up. They asked Age Concern UK to help. The Ministry for Social Policy was not interested but the Rada (Parliament) was. Age Concern Ukraine was set up in 1999, and now has ten branches. There are no branches in eastern Ukraine, however, as people there are reluctant to become volunteers. Funding came from the UK, Germany, the EC and UN. Funds from the Ukrainian government would have been subject to conditions regarding veterans’ associations which the organisation would find difficult to fulfil, so were not provided, but the Ministry for Social Policy is a partner, for example on developing policy towards vulnerable groups. The organisation has 2,000 volunteers, most of them women. This took time to build up as there was no tradition of volunteering and most people, especially the elderly, assumed that it was the job of the state to provide any services of this kind. Most volunteers are over 55 years of age.

Among the difficulties faced by the elderly in Ukraine are the political changes of the 90s, changes in the economy and society, inability to adapt to a new context, feminisation of older age, inadequate income, and political instability. The main problem for elderly people is financial hardship – 46% receive pensions of 85 Euros a month or less. They survive by virtue of their stoicism from long years of hardship and from their kitchen gardens. Male life expectancy is 57 years and female 76 years. Depression is very common among older women. Ms Poliakova’s presentation showed the results of a number of surveys concerning discrimination against the



Galina Poliakova with Mary and Robert Brinkley

elderly, and abuse of various kinds experienced by them. A new EU instrument on care homes for the elderly will be studied but will be difficult for Ukraine to comply with, as state-run care homes are huge Soviet edifices. Even so, there are waiting lists for places in them. Summing up, she said the challenges the organisation faces are all connected with the Soviet heritage, mainly the lack of experience of volunteering, lack of experience of NGO activity, and lack of a tradition of charity.

Bringing the conference to a close, BEARR trustee **Nicola Ramsden** drew out some themes of the conference:

- researchers now have not just anecdotal evidence but 20 years of data collected since the fall of the Soviet system to direct their field work;
- following the period of economic decline, reform of the health and welfare sectors are in progress in most states in the region.
- advocacy (lobbying of the state) is not a major activity by NGOs in the region.

See the back cover for further scenes from the conference. Most photos by Ana Chakhava.

The BEARR Trust is grateful to the Great Britain – Russia Society and Age UK for their support for this conference.



The conference was also supported by Ukraine International Airlines, leading airline to Ukraine and beyond, including daily connections to Tbilisi, Georgia.

Exhibition of paintings from Georgia



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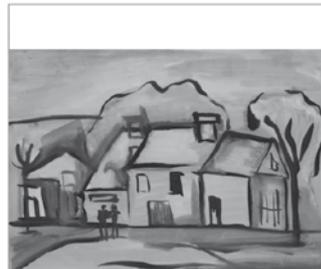
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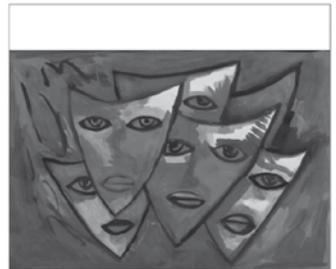
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Pictures by Georgi Kiladze and Gela Jincharadze from the exhibition of works by mental health patients in Georgia supported by Apra-Georgia, mounted by Ana Chakhava for the BEARR Trust conference.

All the pictures were for sale, at £20–30, with all proceeds going to Apra's work. Some paintings are still available. If you are interested in buying or exhibiting any of the pictures, please contact info@bearr.org.

Small Grants Scheme: Project reports

Rehabilitating young offenders

Grantee: Arkhangelsk Regional Public Charitable Organisation 'Rassvet'

Project: To develop training for staff of Arkhangelsk Juvenile Colony and other closed institutions, social centres and NGOs dealing with minor offenders; and to develop training for juvenile offenders to reduce re-offending.

'Rassvet' was established in August 2000 with the following aims:

- Aid to needy children. Priority – support for minor offenders.
- Aid to people who have broken the law, homeless people and people excluded from society.
- Education in the field of human rights.
- Countering drug addiction and HIV/AIDS.

Since 2009 Rassvet staff have sat on the Monitoring Committee for Human Rights in Detention Centres in Arkhangelsk region.

Rassvet has a number of long-term joint cooperation projects with the prison and police services in Arkhangelsk region and often visits closed juvenile institutions. Our experience has shown that juvenile offenders in many cases come from at-risk families, have lost their families and social contacts, and lack basic social skills.

The problem is that after being in closed institutions and with limited education they return to their former social environment.

The goal of the project 'The Way Home' was to prepare juvenile offenders for release from their institutions: to teach them communication and domestic skills and how to deal with conflict and aggression; to motivate them to lead a healthy and independent way of life; to increase their self-awareness and give them new values; to help them overcome challenges and teach them how to say 'no'.

As part of the project funded by The BEARR Trust, experts in social assistance to minors – from Arkhangelsk region – ran a training programme for 18 trainers. These came from Arkhangelsk Juvenile Colony, Severoonezhsk (closed) College, the Municipal Centre for Protection of the Rights of Minors (Arkhangelsk), the centre for the temporary isolation of

minors who have committed crimes, the internat for minors in Severodvinsk, children's homes, and NGOs dealing with juvenile offenders. These participants will absorb what they learned on the programme into their daily work of helping to integrate young offenders into society. During the training course the lecturers also presented the 'case management' method and used practical exercises in social assistance to



minors under the programmes 'My future without crime' and 'My welfare without crime'. The training course was held in September 2011.

The newly educated trainers ran two 'pilot' cycles of training for minor offenders in October 2011. For many of these minors it was the first time they gained any awareness of the reasons for their criminal behaviour. All those teenagers were under the welfare programme and supervision of the Municipal Centre for the Protection of the Rights of Minors (Arkhangelsk).

But we now see that the problem for the very vast Arkhangelsk region is the inadequate number of social centres for minors that can assist them after their release and provide support under the 'case management' system. This should improve in time.

Improving the professional level of specialists working with juvenile offenders, and the exchange of experience among them, directly influences the re-offending rate among minors. The NGO 'Rassvet' has new ideas for further projects to improve the competence of specialists – thereby

combating crime among minors – and to disseminate the project results among other municipalities in the Arkhangelsk region.

Grants such as that from the BEARR Trust can be a great stimulus to the development of new activities, and NGOs are a powerful force for achieving this.

Contact

Elena Ermolina
Executive director, RASSVET
Email: arassvet@atnet.ru



New help for children with mental health problems and their families

Grantee: Shapagat Social Foundation and the Komek Union

Project: to establish a rehabilitation information centre for families of young people with mental health problems in Semei, Kazakhstan, giving free consultations on legal, social, psychological and pedagogical matters.

The mission of our organisations is to provide charity and help to protect the rights of women, children and people with disabilities. We help them by providing free legal advice, transport, leisure activities for disabled women and their families, and psychological counselling.

The main part of our work concerns helping women with disabilities, unemployed women, and families with children with mental health problems. This includes identifying ways of working with local authorities and civil society organisations. Our organisations have established a public citizens' advice centre which does not charge for its services. We also organise seminars for parents of children with mental illness, and a transport service for people in wheelchairs, using two adapted vehicles. To provide work places we have set up a sewing workshop equipped with modern sewing machines for use by partially sighted people. A sports hall has been set up with exercise machines for parents to use with their children.

We have organised charitable fundraising events, and provided charity to disabled women and children with mental illnesses, and distributed food and clothes. Every year at Christmas we hold events for sick, poor and disabled children. We completed our project to establish a Rehabilitation and Information Centre for Families of Children with Mental Health Problems, with financial

support from The BEARR Trust. The Shapagat and Komek NGOs continued their work with a hotline providing free legal advice. At the beginning of the new school year volunteers from the Centre visited the children's hospital, played with the children and gave them toys. More recently we have approached local businesses to ask them to support us financially to help us buy toys to give to children at Christmas.

Contact

Meresh Sharipova, Natalia Malysheva
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Country Profile 4: Georgia¹

Georgia, a sovereign state situated in the Southern Caucasus, covers a territory of 69,700 square km. It shares short borders with Turkey, Armenia and Azerbaijan to the south; Russia to the north and east; and has a western coastline on the Black Sea. The 1990s were marked out by civil unrest and economic malaise before the Rose Revolution of 2003 ushered in a new era of democratic and economic reforms under Mikheil Saakashvili.

Economic and Social Development

Benefiting from its Black Sea location, Georgia was one of the richest parts of the Soviet Union with its economy based around tourism, viticulture, agriculture and mining. The demise of the Soviet economic structures, the civil wars of the 1990s and the 1998 economic crisis contributed to a collapse in living standards which has only been partially restored in the more prosperous years since the Rose Revolution. The government has now introduced free-market reforms focused on deregulation, privatisation, fighting corruption and transforming the social welfare sectors. Nevertheless, Georgia still lies 75th in the UN Human Development Index. GDP per capita is just 4,335 in 2005 purchasing power parity dollars and poverty is endemic.

Health and Welfare

Socioeconomic crises, political uncertainties, large-scale migration and civil unrest have had a significant negative impact on the population's health status (as well as on efforts at measuring it). Basic health indicators started to improve, along with socioeconomic conditions, after the Rose Revolution and life expectancy now stands some way above the CIS average. The leading causes of death are coronary heart disease and stroke, both categories in which

Key facts and figures

Capital city: Tbilisi

Population (2010/1990): 4.6mn / 5.5mn

Ethnicity: 84% Georgian; 7% Azeri; 6% Armenian; 1.5% Russian.

Religion: 84% Orthodox; 10% Muslim.

GDP per head (2009/1995): \$2449 / \$559

Democracy index* (2011): 4.93

Global 'happiness' ranking: 164th

*The (Freedom House) index ranges from 1–7, where higher numbers indicate less democracy.

Georgia appears among the global 'leaders'. Other leading causes (see table below) confirm that lifestyle factors now play a vital role in population health, and to this end, the increasing take-up of tobacco is particularly worrisome.

Top 10 causes of deaths (2010)

Coronary heart disease (10th)	44% (20,013)
Stroke (10th)	26.3%
Liver disease	2.9%
Lung cancer	2.5%
Influenza & Pneumonia	2.0%
Diabetes Mellitus	1.8%
Breast cancer	1.6%
Stomach cancer	1.5%
Other injuries	1.3%
Road traffic accidents	1.1%

Mandatory social health insurance has been abandoned in favour of a market system. While insurance for households in poverty is, in theory, provided by the state, others are expected to cover their own insurance costs, but take up is low. Indeed, healthcare and access to medicine is funded principally (about 70%) from out-of-pocket payments and so is restricted for much of the population. The success of health reforms aimed at improving access to primary care and childcare while also promoting healthier lifestyles will dictate the future health profile of Georgia.

Health facts & figures (2009)

	Geo..	Rus	UK
Life expectancy (male)	69.3	62.8	78.4
Life expectancy (female)	78.0	74.8	82.6
Crude death rate*	10.6	14.2	9.1
Deaths, circulatory*	4.8	6.8	1.7
Deaths, heart disease*	1.1	3.5	0.8
TB incidence*	1.1	0.9	0.1
Cancer incidence*	1.3	3.3	4.9
Infant deaths*	14.9	8.1	4.7
% dying before age 5	16.9	10.2	5.4
Fertility Rate	1.86	1.42	1.91
Sex ratio at birth (m/f)	1.13	1.06	1.05
% male smokers	57.1	70.1	36.7

* per 1,000

1 Data comes from UN Health-for-all database and the WHO <http://www.who.int/countries/en/2>

NGO Focus: STAND International

Homeless – not hopeless

STAND International is a Scottish charity established in 2006 to work with socially and economically disadvantaged individuals and groups in this country and abroad. We look to harness their talents, experience of exclusion and genuine feelings of compassion by providing positive assistance to others, in both their local communities and the wider global community.

The acronym STAND is derived from 'Start A New Day', denoting the idea that participants are allowed to re-evaluate the opportunities presented in life and envisage positive change. Starting as a joint pilot project between two Scottish homeless charities during 2003–2004 the project aimed to facilitate and encourage homeless individuals to take up volunteering within their own communities in Scotland. This was later extended to include participation in short-term volunteering opportunities in Eastern Europe, doing basic renovation/ construction work and providing interactive outdoor activities for orphaned children.

Due to the success of the pilot project, 'STAND International' became a charity in its own right in 2006 and over the years we have continued to develop and foster trusting partnerships, whilst delivering positive assistance to communities in countries such as Belarus, Romania, Latvia and Ukraine. So far we have worked with disabled adults, orphaned children, Roma teenagers and young people entering the care system,



Homeless young people from Scotland participating in activities at a Belarus orphanage

as well as undertaking projects to renovate and restore numerous children's centres and orphanages.

Through intercultural exchanges such as dancing, music and language, national identities have been reinforced, and with some governments pushing to improve English language skills within mainstream schools, the benefits of exposure to native English speakers has become increasingly apparent, providing a mutually invaluable experience.

Since conception we have assisted over 7000 children and young people in the countries where we work.

To ensure that we remain true to one of our core principles of sustainable involvement, we will be piloting a project called NAV (Nadezhda and Vileyka) in Belarus during 2012. This will explore the options available to young people via a local volunteering scheme of peer-mentoring, by linking up with the children's hospital ward, orphanage, two of the secondary schools and the disabled centre.

Volunteering is a particularly unique concept that many people struggle with, especially in post-soviet countries. However our vision is that ongoing projects will stimulate continual change in the way civic society organises itself, and that new approaches to address the multi-layered aspects of social exclusion can be developed.

The impact of the project has shown a myriad of benefits not only to our volunteers and to those within the host



STAND volunteers helping with the construction of a children's centre near Mogilev, Belarus.

GB–Russia Society lectures

country but, perhaps more importantly, it has begun to address issues which have facilitated attitudinal change in the respective civic societies. As such, as an organisation we have been at the vanguard of shaping and changing views on including some of the most excluded groups of individuals within society.



It's arts and crafts time at the orphanage in Belarus.

Our short term volunteering programmes are continually growing and we are looking to forge new partnerships throughout Eastern Europe, Russia and the South Caucasus region with organisations that work with disadvantaged groups. The challenge ahead will be to create partnerships that are sustainable, mutually beneficial and life changing.

STAND International is funded by the British Council under the EU's Youth in Action programme.

Contact

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The Great Britain–Russia Society Programme of Guest Speakers, January–April 2012

Wednesday 11 January

'Russia: The Mafia State'
Luke Harding

Monday 30 January

'See no evil? Labour and the Gulag 1929–31'
Giles Udy

Wednesday, 15 February

'Travels Among the Defiant Peoples of the Caucasus'
Oliver Bullough

Wednesday 29 February

'Peeping through the Iron Curtain: Travellers' Accounts of the Soviet Union and Russia during and after the Cold War'
Professor Chris Read

Thursday 15 March

'The Last Day of the Soviet Union'
Conor O'Clery

Wednesday 22 March

'Stalin's Legacy – How the Soviet Union Waged War on Nature'
Struan Stevenson

Thursday 12 April

'Inside Russia. A Correspondent's Personal Notes'
Bridget Kendall

Wednesday 25 April

'The Siege of Leningrad: a New Perspective from Personal Diaries'
Anna Reid

All lectures take place at
Pushkin House,
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The Development of NGOs in Belarus

by Maxim Padbiarozkin

After the collapse of the Soviet Union NGOs started up and multiplied rapidly, with about 300 new NGOs being registered each year in a country with a population of about nine and a half million.

From 1991 on there has been a more or less steady rise in the number of NGOs. If the trend of 300 new NGOs annually had continued, there would by now be about 6,000. However, changes in legislation and a gradual increase in state control over the activities of NGOs constrained their growth. Statistics from the Belarus Ministry of Justice show that on 1 April 1998 there were 2191 NGOs and by 1999 there were 2502. In 1999 the second programme of re-registration of NGOs took effect, as a result of which by the end of 1999 the number of NGOs had declined to 1537.

After that, the number of NGOs grew more slowly. On 12 August 2002, 1980 NGOs were registered, and on 1 January 2004, 2214 NGOs. By 1 July 2007 there were 2223 and at the end of 2009, the number was about the same – 2225. By 1 January 2011, the number was 2325 (all statistics given exclude political parties, trade unions, associations and foundations).



Volunteers spring cleaning the summer holiday site at the Belarusian Children's Hospice (just outside Minsk)

The growth of NGOs in Belarus can only be understood in the historical context of the country's development. Non-governmental organisations began to develop in Belarus in the second half of the 1980s. Their development since then can be divided into three periods:

- The crisis of the Soviet system, the emergence of informal associations, and their politicisation (end of 1980s to 1991). This phase was linked to the Perestroika (restructuring) programme and the liberalisation of Soviet society under Gorbachev. The inevitable result of this policy was a crisis of the Soviet system. The move towards pluralist opinions naturally resulted in the emergence of numerous non-governmental social groups demanding to participate in both discussion and the adoption of political decisions. Allowing the population to be included in the discussion of their interests gave the initial impetus to the formation of informal groups. Most groups were started by young people and were active in culture and information, the revival of the Belarussian language, national cultural traditions etc. Gradually an awareness spread that solving problems in society could not be done without politicisation of the informal movement, destruction of the Communist regime and a deep democratisation of society.
- The 'formalisation' and depoliticisation of the non-governmental sector, and the establishment of the pluralistic model of representation of the nation's interests (1991–1996). The second phase began after the collapse of the Communist regime and the independence of the Belarus state. These events helped to promote the role of NGOs. In 1994 a Law on Public Organisations was passed, which also helped the development of the non-governmental sector. The number of NGOs steadily grew. Official statistics show that the number of registered NGOs rose from 24 in 1990 to 1000

Russian internships

at the end of 1995. NGOs became more professional and specialised and were thus able to help to deal with practical problems in various spheres of life. It was in this period that most of the NGOs were formed which today are symbolic of the third (non-governmental) sector in Belarus, and many international NGOs were established as well.

At the same time, depoliticisation of the third sector began. NGOs drew back from direct political activity and focused on public education, environmental issues and academic research, and helping the victims of the Chernobyl nuclear accident, people with disabilities, local administration, and so on. Gradually NGOs began to form partnerships with governmental structures, particularly at local level. Influential groups active in diverse spheres, including unions of entrepreneurs, independent trade unions, etc., began to influence government institutions. This growing network of groups cooperating with each other should have led to the creation of a system of checks and balances, capable of insuring against the risks of any kind of dictatorship of some interests over others.



St Valentine's Day at the Belarusian Children's Hospice

- The re-establishment of the corporative system of group interests, repoliticisation and isolation of the NGO sector (1997 to the present day). Political changes in November 1996 put a stop to the development of many of the trends described above, and marked the beginning of a new phase, which is still in progress. In 1996–7 the government began a policy of deliberate expansion into the NGO sphere in order to establish greater control over it and to broaden its own presence throughout society as far as possible.

The government's policy towards NGOs has two main strands: to constrain the capacity of NGOs, and to create state-public organisations to replace independent NGOs and promulgate the state's policies. These processes have led to a situation in Belarus today in which there are large numbers of unregistered NGOs, but it is not possible even to estimate their numbers without specific research. It is very likely, however, that there are as many unregistered organisations as registered ones.

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Russian internships needed for Oxford University students

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The funding provided by the organisation should be sufficient to cover the costs of travel to, and maintenance in, Russia for the duration of the internship.

For more information contact Thomas Marsden of Oxford University International Internship programme, email international@careers.ox.ac.uk, tel: 01865 274737

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New Trustee

The Trustees are delighted to announce that Mike Simmonds is joining them as a Trustee. Mike has been a long-standing supporter of BEARR, and we are looking forward to working more closely with him.



Mike, aged 40, came originally from the North East but has

been living in Kent permanently for 20 years. He is married to Ana and they have a 21 month old boy called William.

Mike has spent the last 19 years creating and growing Q'Straint, a business that provides restraint systems for wheelchair users in transport, which was awarded the Queen's Award for enterprise for overseas trade in 2007. Mike is now embarking on a new career path as an advisor to and investor in companies which are aiming to develop their overseas trade substantially.

New Treasurer

Patricia Wright has resigned as Honorary Treasurer because of other commitments. However we are delighted that Carolyn Davis, up to now our efficient and energetic Honorary Bookkeeper, has kindly agreed to take on the role of Honorary Treasurer

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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 is:

- to promote and support cooperation between the third sector in the United Kingdom and appropriate partners in Russia and Eurasia, especially in health and social welfare, with a view to strengthening civil society.

The Trust will do this 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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