

CEELBAS / BEARR Conference 15 June 2009

Backwards or Forwards? Challenges facing NGOs in Russia

'Backwards or Forwards?' was the third in the increasingly successful CEELBAS/BEARR partnership conferences. There were again 70 plus attendees drawn from academia and think tanks (22 per cent), NGOs and funding bodies (54 per cent), government/ex-government (six per cent) and others, including journalists, consultants, banks, business and independents (28 per cent).

The conference provided for:

- High profile speakers from key Russian and regional NGOs
- International knowledge exchange and interaction between NGOs and academics
- Most up-to-date guides on laws and regulations governing the operation of NGOs
- Participation of leading academics and doctoral students
- Renewed publicity for BEARR-CEELBAS collaboration.

Dr Robin Aizlewood, Director of CEELBAS, introduced the conference with reference to the impressive impact on both collaboration and exchange achieved in the previous 18 months. The value of the collaboration was reiterated by Tony Longrigg (BEARR Chairman) and in panel comments from Professor Richard Sakwa and Elena Panfilova as well as from delegates on the day and in their formal feedback.

The evidence of the day, summarised below, suggested a qualified 'forwards' to the main question. NGOs have found their way around state constraints, and economic growth has given people the security and the time to start to think



Christopher Gerry (Chair) with speakers Elena Panfilova and Richard Sakwa

about education, health and other social issues. In doing so, acceptance of NGOs and civil society is starting to become embedded, though in a manner often peculiar to the region.

Politics and civil society in contemporary Russia

On civil society, **Professor Richard Sakwa** (University of Kent) argued that while Russia does have an active sector of civic and social associations, it doesn't have the 'normative state' or the free public sphere where the former interacts with the latter. It therefore doesn't have a complete civil society. The Russian state still intervenes consistently, partly out of fear that NGOs could harbour revolutionary 'colour technologies'. **Elena Panfilova** (Transparency International) shared Sakwa's optimism that some elements of civil society are emerging. Social movements, including through the Internet, have developed so much momentum that it is now

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too late for the government to suppress them except through direct violence.

The discussion that followed, involving questions or comments from UCL, INTRAC, Birmingham University, Saferworld, BEARR and ThePromise, focused on the impact of the economic crisis, the role of trade unions, possible approaches to minimising corruption given the institutional environment, and regional issues.

Laws, Regulations and Taxes

Daria Miloslavskaya (International Centre for Not-for-Profit Law) explained how Russian NGOs are governed by a web of legislation incorporating the general provisions of the Russian Constitution, the Civil Code and the Tax Code, as well as more than 30 further Federal Laws on Not-for-Profit organisations, Charitable Activities and Public Associations. There is specific tax and fiscal legislation, and legislation on foreign funding of NGOs. In practice, however, reporting requirements are less onerous than they appear and, despite inconsistencies in implementation allied with periodic bouts of instability, NGOs are increasingly able to comply with and understand the regulations.

Miloslavskaya detailed the tax treatment of donations and grants and BEARR has subsequently circulated her explanation and a template for tax-exempt 'donation agreements', though a good lawyer remains a strong requirement when drafting such agreements.

A lively discussion involving questions and comments from CAF, UCL, BEARR, Look East Wild Earth, CS Mott Foundation and Lincoln followed, raising a number of points: a well-managed NGO should not need more than two hours (or at most a day) to fill in the reporting forms; Russian organisations can donate to countries in the 'near-abroad', such as Belarus, provided the donation complies



Anna Bailey (UCL) asks a question

with that country's legislation; the term 'Non-Commercial Organisation' is used in Russia rather than 'NGO', but it is recognised that definitions are a problem and it is hoped to address this before legislation is amended; and public opinion on NGOs has become more positive since Medvedev's meetings of the Presidential Council on Civil Society.

NGO funding: opportunities and constraints

Elena Topoleva (ASI) reported that information on the third sector in Russia has increased since the Higher School of Economics established a government-funded research centre. Their statistics show that 12 per cent of NGOs are purely voluntary and have no funding at all while half of all NGOs have income of less than £10,000. Thirty per cent of NGOs receive funding from the state budget, either from federal funds (six per cent), regional funds (11 per cent) or municipal funds (13 per cent). Although only four per cent of NGOs declare foreign funding, almost 10 per cent receive funding from Russian foundations which may be partly funded by foreign money.

Federal grants consist of Grants of the Public Chamber or 'The President's Grants', which are disseminated through different institutions each year and awarded through competitions. Regional grants are far more variable and depend on local laws. Some have been cut because of the financial crisis, while others might be limited to support for veterans or the disabled. Municipal grants can be quite generous and wide-ranging in big cities such as St Petersburg and Ekaterinburg. Government foundations have been established by various ministries (e.g. Russian Children in Need Fund (under the Ministry of Health and Social Development).

Olga Alexeeva (CAF) explained that there are now nearly 100 wealthy private foundations. Major national companies usually have a charity policy, and 80 per cent of such giving is directed to the town where they are based and where they have inherited responsibility for the Soviet



Charlie Buxton (INTRAC) makes a comment

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infrastructure, especially in one-industry towns. Local companies are more likely to be privately owned and therefore behave more like individuals, donating to local populist causes. High-net-worth individuals and the middle class also support causes such as children, orphanages, etc. They often by-pass existing NGOs and prefer informal channels, such as friends. The ultra-wealthy are overwhelmingly young (80 per cent aged 30-45), and their philanthropy is a means of presenting and explaining themselves to the outside world. Their giving rarely benefits established NGOs.

Anna Sevortian (Centre for the Development of Democracy and Civil Society) outlined four themes in NGOs' current experience of foreign funding: (i) the need to downplay human rights and democracy agendas in projects; (ii) greater competition for funding because better ideas are being generated; (iii) the closure of the Ford Foundation and doubt over whether Open Russia will meet its obligations has created a sense of fire-fighting and made it difficult to plan ahead; (iv) an overall decrease in international funding available.

Elena Ragozhina (New Style Magazine) focused on funding from the UK-based Russian diaspora and argued that it is distinct from that of the US and Israel in so far as it is dominated by business people (many of whom have businesses in Russia) and students. Certain ideas persist, even among these groups, namely that the state should provide for the needy and that charities are not trustworthy organisations. Ragozhina believes that this is the right time to educate Russians in the UK and her work involves running annual charity and other networking events.

Brook Horowitz (International Business Leaders Forum) reported the work of the IBLF in promoting social development as a function of the company's growth. The Russian corporate sector is most likely to give to promote financial literacy and anti-corruption.

Horowitz thinks that there is some scope for NGOs to interest companies that have 'health' as part of their brand in prevention campaigns, particularly as the Russian government has tended to focus on cures. Alliances could be created with medical or pharmaceutical companies.

Discussion followed questions from CAF, St Gregory's Foundation, Railway Children, INTRAC, BEARR, UCL, ThePromise and CS Mott Foundation. It emerged that BEARR and ASI are starting to publish information on donors and grant-givers on the BEARR website, including those sourced through the UK government. The Russian Donors' Forum also has a database, but many of the listed foundations are private and do not give grants to other NGOs. There was healthy discussion about the role of multinationals and the repeated observation that the Russian public will be more inclined to give money if instant happiness and a miracle are promised.

A full record of the conference is available on The BEARR website at <http://www.bearr.org/node/1705>



The funding panel: Daryl Ann Hardman (Chair), Elena Topoleva, Olga Alexeeva, Anna Sevortian

Additional information

Extensive research on grant-givers was carried out in preparation for the conference by Anna Sevortian and by Maria Olshanskaya of ASI. This material is now available in searchable form in the section on 'Funding Sources' on the BEARR website (www.bearr.org).

Three conference participants used PowerPoint presentations. Their slides can be accessed as follows:

Daria Miloslavskaya: Russian Not-for-Profit Legislation

http://www.bearr.org/en/Miloslavskaya/conf_June_2009/Law

Olga Alexeeva: Russian Donors: Opportunities and Challenges

http://www.bearr.org/en/Alexeeva/conf_June_2009/Russian_donors

Elena Topoleva: State Funding for NGOs

http://www.bearr.org/en/Topoleva/conf_June_2009/State_NGO_Funding

In addition, Daria Miloslavskaya kindly provided several lengthy background papers:

Laws and Other Provisions covering NGOs in Russia

http://www.bearr.org/en/NGO_Laws/June_2009

NGO Legislation; Changes June 2009

<http://www.bearr.org/en/node/1943>

How to make a Donation in Russia

http://www.bearr.org/en/Russia/donations/June_2009

SMALL GRANTS SCHEME

The BEARR Trust Small Grants Scheme 2009

BEARR were impressed by the many excellent applications received for the 2009 grants and the many and varied organisations active in these areas of work. It was a difficult task assessing and choosing winners from the more than 80 proposals we received. We were sorry not to be able to support more than a small number of projects, but wish all the other applicants good luck with their much-needed work.

Grants were awarded as follows, under each segment of the scheme:

Helping the homeless reintegrate into society

The Institute of Practice Lawyers, Samara, for a project bringing together all active NGOs and relevant local authority departments to look at a more comprehensive way of helping ex-offenders, migrant workers, refugees and other marginalised groups in the region to get better support in health, housing and employment.

Caritas, Moscow, for the purchase of 100 single-use cameras to be distributed around hostels for the homeless with offers of food in exchange for a completed film. Caritas will organise four exhibitions of the best photos of life on the streets, in an attempt to improve understanding of homeless people and change negative attitudes towards them.

Kitezh will also continue to receive its ongoing grant to support students in further education from the Kitezh orphan village.

This segment of the scheme is sponsored by the Moscow office of the law firm Baker Botts.

Relieving the distress of human trafficking

Votum, Odessa, Ukraine, for developing cooperation between governmental structures and NGOs in Odessa, educating police, other specialists and the public at large in trafficking issues and creating experience exchange groups for dealing with this complex issue. Odessa, being a port, works not only with local women but the many passing through, on their way into or out of the country.

Changing attitudes to disability

The Promise, Ryazan, for a final train-the-trainers two-day workshop, and translation of the last five modules into Russian, for their project to introduce Portage (for more information on this practice see page 11), which is now a part of the disabilities curriculum for social work training.

Hope and Health, Chisinau, Moldova, for cooking lessons for people with mental disabilities to teach them greater independence in life. These skills will also assist by freeing their carers from some domestic duties so that they can go to work.

New Life, Konotop, Ukraine, for seminars as part of a public awareness campaign centred on the talents and contribution of disabled people to society. By training volunteers to seek out individual stories and make five video films looking at their achievements, they aim to reduce the stigma of disability and further a more positive public attitude towards disability.

This last segment of the scheme is sponsored by Q'straint, manufacturers of seatbelts for wheelchair-users.

Major upgrade to information on grants on BEARR website



BEARR has been aware for some time of the weaknesses in the Funding Sources section of the website. This has now been tackled, and users should find a much improved database.

In preparation for the June conference, BEARR commissioned two major pieces of research: from Anna Sevortian on international and foreign national sources of funding for NGOs in Russia and other FSU countries, and from ASI (Maria Olshanskaya) on funding from Russian sources and from international organisations with an office in Russia.

While it is impossible to cover every grant from every source, given their number and complexity, the site should now cover all major donors whose grants are available for projects in the field of health and welfare in our region.

As part of BEARR's regular contract with ASI, the Funding Sources section of the website will be monitored on a regular basis and the information updated and supplemented as necessary.

If you know of any major funding sources which are not covered on the site, please let us know at info@bearth.org.

The BEARR Trust Small Grants Scheme 2008: Institute for Democracy, Comrat, Moldova

by *Tatiana Sergeeva,
Institute for Democracy*

The **Institute for Democracy** was awarded a grant for the project 'Increasing the Role of the Police and Civil Society in Fighting Trafficking in Women and Girls'.

The project has involved:

- A round table on 'International Legislation and Methods of Fighting Trafficking in Women' for professors at Comrat State University. This covered legal definitions, methods of recruitment, the relevant UN and Council of Europe Conventions and OSCE Action Plan. Participants were most interested in the material presented. Prof Sosna commented: 'The round table was very useful for me personally. I am going to use the knowledge obtained in my future lectures.' He thanked the Institute for Democracy and The BEARR Trust for the interesting and useful project.
- Four seminars on 'Increasing the Role of the Police in Preventing and Fighting Trafficking in Women' for 87 law students at Comrat University. These covered, in addition: the role of education, commercial or non-commercial sexual exploitation, slavery or similar, forced use in armed conflict or crime, removal of tissues for transplantation, rape for reproductive purposes, and illegal adoption for purposes of exploitation.
- Two seminars entitled 'They are Victims: Urgent Psychological Help to Victims of Trafficking' for 39 police officers from the Gagausia region. Participants were chosen in cooperation with the Administration of Home Affairs of Gagausia. Priority was given to officers directly engaged in the struggle against trafficking in Gagausia. The seminars helped them understand that victims are not themselves guilty.
- Two seminars on 'Preventing and Fighting Trafficking in Women' for 42 police officers from Gagausia. These were devoted to the role of the police in suppressing trafficking: legal definitions, the importance and methods of identifying victims, recruitment methods, border crossing, transport arrangements, and the range of trafficking activities outlined above.



- An education campaign involving the distribution of 20,000 leaflets quoting national laws on women's rights and responsibility for trafficking in women.

The aims of the project have been met. Moldova is a supplier of 'live goods', but also a transit country, and needs a comprehensive policy to deal with it all. In running our events, we are obtaining experience and skills; we are becoming an important mechanism for the state and society in the fight against this vice. Our activities have improved society's access to information on trafficking and methods of ending it, and have led to cooperation and partnership among various social forces and interested parties, including the organs of state power, law enforcement agencies, non-governmental organisations, international organisations, and the mass media.

Activities under the project have been announced and described in the mass media in Moldova, on Gagausia TeleRadio, in the magazine 'Law and Life', and in the newspaper 'Peak Hour' and others.

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Institute for Democracy seminar in progress

SMALL GRANTS SCHEME

The BEARR Trust Small Grants Scheme 2008: Kitezh Students Report

In 2008-2009 The Berr Trust grant from Baker Botts, Moscow, supported two students from Kitezh Children's Community in their studies at university in Moscow.

Although the foster parents are only legally responsible for their children until they turn 18, Kitezh parents are committed to supporting their higher education to prepare them to become responsible, effective adults. The grant pays for the rent of a 2-roomed flat in Moscow, the students' university fees and books, transport from Moscow to Kitezh and a modest living allowance. In September 2009 two more Kitezh students will attend university in Moscow and one in Kaluga. Roman Azamatov and Evgeny Sinko will also be supported by the Baker Botts grant.

Vasily

Vasily Burdin is 19. He came to Kitezh when he was nine, from an orphanage in Kaluga. Vasily has completed his second year at Moscow Academy of Economics and Law and he has three more years to complete his degree. He did very well in all his exams this year. His main subjects are Civil Law, Criminal Law, International Law, English, Physical Culture, and History of Law.



Vasily (left) with two younger boys at Kitezh

During his work experience at Baker Botts, Vasily gained experience of contract law, which interests him more than criminal law. While others

are studying the theory, he has had practice, so he knows what it is about. He also spent 10 days at Nogatinsky regional court, where he witnessed criminal trials from theft to drugs and murder. He said it was hard to watch, and also quite boring because in movies the trials are like performances, but in reality the judge decided everything and Vasily just saw people going to jail. He wants to be in a legal business where everything depends on his work and effort, and where more imagination and communication with people is needed.

Vasily has a good internet connection that he pays for from his living allowance. Often he reads political articles, especially on Russian politics and the economic situation. He watches BBC or CNN news, although sometimes he doesn't believe the foreign news broadcasts. Very often he composes music, and broadcasts his songs on the internet. During the holidays he returns to Kitezh and takes part as an adult in the working life there.

Valentina

Valentina (Valya) has completed her third year in the philological department of the Russian State University for Humanities. She passed four out of five exams with distinction, and one with excellent. She also got a distinction for her final coursework. Her tutor is very encouraging about her work, and judges that she has great potential. She also works as an assistant in the Russian-American department of the university on the organizational side and helps to run conferences. Being fluent in English, she also plays a key role in coordination between foreign guests and the Russian side.

Valya has made many friends. Her best friend at university has visited

Kitezh every summer since Valya first took her there three years ago. One of Valya's main hobbies is role-playing games, especially historical ones. This helps her to meet people with similar interests, in addition to her university friends. Valya also has friends who are musicians, so she often goes to concerts. She has carried on with 'poi' with great enthusiasm and success and has decided to join singing classes in September. She also bought rollerblades and whizzes around Moscow on them!

Valya comes back to Kitezh every holiday, and sustains very close links with everyone there, adults and children alike. She helps with the winter and summer camps, and organises role-play games with the adults.



She sometimes teaches the children Russian language and literature.

Ecologia Youth Trust is very grateful to The BEARR Trust and Baker Botts for providing the means to support these young people to realise their potential.

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The BEARR Trust Annual Lecture 2009

Russia and the EU: Muddle and Missed Opportunities

by Nicola Ramsden,
BEARR Trustee

The BEARR Trust Annual Lecture was held on 27 April, kindly hosted once again by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development. The BEARR Trust is most grateful to EBRD for its consistent interest and support.

The lecture was given by the distinguished journalist and regional expert **Quentin Peel**, International Affairs Editor of the Financial Times and the paper's former chief correspondent in Moscow. He dedicated his lecture to the memory of Jill Braithwaite, a founder of The BEARR Trust.

Quentin Peel described the relationship between Russia and the EU as like an arranged marriage from hell. 'Condemned to live together', in the words of Lilia Shevtsova of the Carnegie Foundation, the dysfunctional relationship of these neighbours is not just a case of muddle and missed opportunities, but also of profound mutual misunderstanding. 'Why don't we understand each other better?' asked Peel. 'Where did we go wrong? And how can we try to make the relationship work better?'

Peel set his analysis of these questions against the background of the recent economic and financial crisis, which has, perhaps unexpectedly, made Russia's emerging form of authoritarian state capitalism look a less sure alternative to liberal market capitalism. We tend to pay most attention to Russia's relationship with the US, as does Russia itself, reflecting some nostalgia for its former super-power status. But it is Russia's relationship with the EU that matters most for the future. While Russian-NATO relations naturally matter because of security, Russian-EU relations go wider. As Russia transforms and the EU enlarges, the two areas are increasingly connected through trade, migration, communications, the environment, culture, energy and technology. Each side knows that the other is an essential partner, and yet both have failed to engage.

The prospects looked better a few years ago. For a time, back in 2000, it seemed that Putin recognised that, for a post-Soviet, no-longer-super-power Russia, relations with Europe would be key. From his pre-election hosting of Tony Blair at the opera, to his address in German to the Bundestag, it had looked as though Putin was about to seize a fantastic opportunity to change Russia's geopolitical orientation and let it become a European country. For their

part, Tony Blair tactfully skirted round Putin's re-launching of the Chechen war, and the Bundestag showed no public objection to the origins of Putin's fluent German – his time working for the KGB in Dresden. But the harmonious beginning was deceptive, and the relationship has since become bogged down in mutual frustration.

Russia and the EU countries have much in common, including facing the economic problems caused by an ageing population and shrinking workforce. Their trade interdependence is significant, but the fact that the EU is the less dependent partner is perhaps the first source of irritation in the relationship. The EU takes more than half of Russia's exports (mainly of oil, gas and raw materials), but Russia only accounts for less than 10 per cent of EU exports – it is the EU's third most important market, but a long way behind the US and China. Peel also threw light on the commonly held belief that the EU is highly dependent on Russia for its energy supplies. The dependence is greater in the new member states, whereas the older states, especially Germany and Italy, have been diversifying their energy sources for some time. Peel considered the idea that Russia could switch supplies to China absurd, given the amount needed to be invested in supply infrastructure.



Russia's relationship with the EU goes far beyond economics: the cultural ties between the areas are stronger than often perceived. According to Dmitri Trenin, Russians feel more at home, culturally, in Europe than anywhere else in the world. Far from striking up Eastern alliances to play off the West, Russia sees itself as a bulwark against Eastern barbarianism – the historic bastion of 'Europe's ancient Eastern (Orthodox) tradition', as Trenin puts it. So Russia

has sought an exclusive status in its negotiations with the EU, wanting the right to participate in EU decision-making without being an EU member. The fact that Russia might be treated merely as a partner comparable to India or Egypt leads it to feel under-appreciated and misunderstood.

Russia's relationship with the EU goes far beyond economics: the cultural ties between the areas are stronger than often perceived.

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Russia itself does not understand, nor particularly like, the EU. Only 30 government officials follow EU matters. Peel described the paradox of Russia reasserting a national identity and sovereignty after years of being submerged in the Soviet Union, while the EU pursues the opposite course of blurring national boundaries. But the current EU President, Vaclav Klaus, is a euro-sceptic. Peel suspected that when he and Putin met at the EU-Russia summit in Tatarstan in June, they might find unexpected common ground in their view of the EU as a potential re-creation of the Soviet Union.

How well does the EU know Russia? Unfortunately the EU states that know Russia best are the new members from the Baltic republics, and Bulgaria. Their default position is suspicion and hostility. Otherwise, the EU's understanding of Russia is informed by misconceptions. According to the Estonian MEP Tunne Kelam, who is a member of the EU-Russia Parliamentary Cooperation Committee, one mistake is to hide behind Churchill's 'riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma' description of Russia. The other is to indulge in naïve optimism about Moscow's understanding of democracy and the rule of law. Churchill's aphorism is often misrepresented, and anyway, according to Kelam, there is no mystery at all about Russia's pursuit of its national – or even imperial – interests. Europe should recognise Russia's self-interest, and counter-balance it by agreeing on its own interests.

This is something that the EU is rather bad at doing, giving Russia the opportunity to divide and rule. (It is already obvious that Russia prefers to deal only with the bigger states: France, Germany, and Italy.) However, this will not work as a long-term strategy since a fundamental European solidarity tends to emerge in the face of Russian misbehaviour, be it strong-arming Estonia, blocking Polish meat exports, or cutting off gas supplied through Ukraine to countries such as Bulgaria and Slovakia. What Russia does not grasp about the EU is that its member states have been drawn together through the magnetic attraction of finance and shared values. Russia is more familiar with the politics of size and the use of muscle-power on smaller neighbours.

And here is the next problem: competition for influence in Russia's 'near-abroad'. In Ukraine, for example, a majority would like to join the EU (not necessarily NATO however). The EU itself is not certain about this, while Russia does not regard the 'Little Russians' of Ukraine as constituting a valid independent country at all. The 'near-abroad' has been the source of most of the divisive issues that have soured Russian-EU relations since the promising start in 2000.

Russia did not perceive the 1999 war in Kosovo as a humanitarian exercise ... but as the old enemy flexing its muscles nearby, without taking account of Russia's concerns.

Last year's conflict in Georgia over the self-determination of South Ossetia and Abkhazia finally made it clear that Russian – EU relations are becoming a dialogue of the deaf.

The war in Kosovo in 1999, although not in Russia's immediate backyard, and involving NATO rather than the EU, was not perceived by Russia as a humanitarian exercise. Rather, it was seen as the old enemy flexing its muscles nearby, without taking account of Russia's concerns. An even greater shock to Russia was the Orange Revolution in Ukraine in 2004. European pressure to re-run the elections was felt by Russia to be an EU intervention in the former republic regarded as least deserving of independence. While the recently enlarged EU eventually coalesced to support democratic values, Putin saw a direct threat to his power. It was then only a short step to using energy supplies as a political tool to reassert Russia's power – an easy move in Belarus, but the alarm bells rang when Russia turned off the gas tap to Ukraine in 2006. Russia still protests about Ukrainian corruption, but EU demands for more transparency and competition in the gas trade would expose both sides, given the murkiness that bolsters Gazprom's finances and power in Moscow as well as in Kiev.

Last year's conflict in Georgia over the self-determination of South Ossetia and Abkhazia finally made it clear that Russian–EU relations are becoming a dialogue of the deaf. A setback to the European assumption that economic growth and prosperity bring peace and stability to a region, the events also showed that Russia still assumes an imperial right to dictate affairs in its neighbourhood, even where that neighbourhood is now Europe's too.

As Russia adopts a more aggressively nationalistic tone, including blaming the financial crisis on 'foreigners', what can be done to improve relations with the EU? Peel was clear that the 'near-abroad' is the most important area to address. This is our common neighbourhood, and the highest priority must be to make those countries prosperous and secure. It must be made clear that the presence of a Russian minority is not an excuse for intervention. It is important that the EU develops a clear legal framework, defining the boundaries within which the EU and Russia pursue partnerships.

Like many speakers at BEARR's lectures and conferences, Peel believes that the way forward lies in practical cooperation. Energy is one obvious area; global warming is another. There are common demographic problems to address, and EU expertise in dealing with AIDS and epidemics might be helpful. Progress has already been made in education and science, with Russia participating in EU research programmes and in the Bologna university exchange scheme. But the visa regime is still too restrictive against Russians – we should err on the side of generosity. Russia and the EU may have a prickly and mutually uncomprehending relationship at present, but it is an essential relationship that cannot be ignored.

HOMELESS YOUTH



In 2006 I ventured out to Perm to volunteer for Love's Bridge, a charity supporting homeless and underprivileged children and young people, co-managed by my sister and brother-in-law Hannah-Louise and Hamish Heald. At the outset it was difficult to see that Perm had much of a problem. Apart from the typical poverty you would expect around a Russian city – the aged wooden buildings and crumbling soviet apartment blocks – it wasn't obvious that there were any street children at all. However, once I had spent some time in the charity's day centre, which gives underprivileged children and homeless young people a place to come and learn new skills, wash, eat and seek medical advice, I began to realise the seriousness of the problem and the impact Russia's recent history has had on the lives of these unfortunate young people.

Most of the children were very open and honest about their way of life and I knew it would make an interesting film project. I decided that I could do something to help them tell their stories and also help Love's Bridge by making a promotional film for the charity. I had just graduated from Bournemouth Media School, and for me, a promotional film was a good first step into making a professional short documentary. Six months later I managed to raise enough money to return to Perm with cinematographer Nicolas Doldinger. We spent three

weeks filming in February 2007, highlighting the situation during the winter months. The shoot was a great success and the completed DVD has since brought a lot of attention to the subject, both in Perm and in the UK. We have been mentioned in numerous Russian and English language newspapers and held many fundraising events for Love's Bridge. It has also inspired new volunteers to go out to Perm to help.

Shortly after completing this film, Nicolas and I set up CNCreatives, a non-profit media production company with the mission to create promotional films for small charities doing important work around the world, in a sense creating a kind of social

advertising company. Documentary has an amazing power to inspire audiences and to create social change. We believe that by making low-cost promotional films we will in turn have access to the individual stories and experiences that could then be adapted into a documentary film suitable for broadcast – giving valuable airtime to important causes. In 2008 we used this model to take our Love's Bridge film project one step further and produce an hour-long documentary that would be suitable for broadcast, and this project is called *A Russian Fairytale*.

The film is told through the eyes of four characters between the ages of 19 and 22, who have spent much of



Filming Kolya as he prepares to inject himself with heroin.

HOMELESS YOUTH

their lives living together on the streets of Perm. They are all trying to fulfil the promise they've made themselves to leave the streets behind and make something of their lives. However, this is not as easy as it sounds. With a history of freedom, lack of education and official identity and addiction to drugs and other substances, the odds are stacked against them. Some describe their life on the streets as romantic and like a fairytale, but they are all too aware of the dangers, hopelessness, ill health, violence and death that haunt their existence. Through their personal stories we learn how they escaped the turmoil that was affecting many families in the turbulent 1990s and found they could lead a life by their own rules, sleeping where they found shelter, freedom to use drugs and not having to worry about school, work or abuse at home.

It has been a difficult and challenging project especially as we are working in such a volatile environment with unpredictable characters. The language barrier at times was extremely difficult, and we were lucky to have volunteer translators around 90 per cent of the time. Also, as this is our first film for broadcast, we lacked financial support from a broadcaster and so it has needed to be self-funded from the beginning. We've relied on individual donations as well as sponsors and investors to help fund our production, and without that help it wouldn't be possible. If you are able to help us, your individual generosity can make a significant contribution to helping us to complete this important film. Our website is www.arussianfairytale.com – you can see clips from the film and also contact us with questions or comments. We would be very happy to hear from you, and add you to our mailing list.

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Kolya helping us with equipment whilst interviewing Irina outside one of the abandoned buildings the teenagers find to live in.



Sasha drinking water from a jam jar in a basement.

Ksusha's story

Ksusha has been running away from home since the age of seven. Her mother was murdered when Ksusha was just a small child, and poor relations with her stepmother resulted in her abandonment by her father and ultimately running away from home.

She has spent most of her life on the streets and has already spent time in prison. Now 22, she is trying to beat her addictions, get a legitimate job and get off the streets for good.



Ksusha hiding her bag of glue on the streets.

The Promise: changing the lives of disabled children in Russia

by Wendy Tabuteau

Portage – central to the work of The Promise, a UK registered NGO – is an early intervention model designed to support the progress of pre-school children presenting delays in their overall development. First introduced in Portage, a town in Wisconsin, USA, in the 1970s the home visiting model is now used throughout the world. In the UK alone, there are 140 registered Portage services.

The aim of Portage is to support young children's overall development: their play, communication and social relationships, encouraging them to participate in the day-to-day life of their peers. Having established starting points – things the child can do now – parents and carers and their Portage worker identify what the child needs to do next to build on progress so far. Drawing on familiar games and routines of childhood, Portage uses a precision teaching approach to design a series of games and activities for the child to practise with the parent and carer each day. Each activity takes the child a tiny step towards a new developmental skill, for example:

- to give eye contact to the parent/ carer during a nursery song
- to imitate a gesture such as waving 'bye bye'
- to draw a circle.

In November 2002, Sarah Settelen, the founder of The Promise, was invited to introduce Portage into the Ryazan Baby Home by its director, Tatiana Alexandrovna Gross. After a successful pilot project, developed by The Promise in collaboration with Mollie White, a member of the evaluation team who introduced Portage into the UK in the 1970s, Portage was provided for all the children with developmental

delays in the Baby Home. Follow-up training and quality control, built into the original pilot, is a strong feature of delivery and development. In 2006, Portage was introduced to an orphanage in Yelatma, a village 160 km from Ryazan, which is home to older children with profound disabilities. The Promise now provides Portage to 70 children in state-run orphanages in the Ryazan Oblast.

From the beginning of The Promise's work, families and other organisations in Ryazan were involved in the monitoring processes involved in the Portage model. They acted as stakeholders, informing and involving interested parties in the Portage project taking place at the Baby Home and contributing to decisions on further development. Their role was central to the decision to set up a community project to support families caring for their children with special needs in the home. The Promise was able to collaborate with local NGOs – Our Children, Rostock, the All Russian Society for People with Disabilities and the Rehabilitation Centre for Children with Cerebral Palsy – to identify families who might benefit from Portage. In addition, the Psychology Department of Ryazan State University was increasingly interested in Portage both through their attendance at the 2005 Portage Workshop and participation in the



Nina and George enjoying a book together. George joined the community Portage programme in November 2008 and has made significant progress with his language skills.

Portage Review Group. This led to an agreement by the University to put forward psychology and 'defectology' (special educational needs) students as volunteer community Portage workers and to allow the hours spent doing Portage to count towards the students' course work.

In May 2006 the community Portage service began with a Senior Portage Worker (Nina Davydova) and four volunteer Portage workers. Since then, The Promise has trained 15 students in Portage and they have worked with 38 families in Ryazan. For many of the families, the weekly visit of their Portage worker is the only

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AFRICAN REFUGEES

African Refugees in Russia

by *Brigitte Lafrechoux,*
Icumbi volunteer

African refugees are few and far between in Russia, and are met with little understanding by people and authorities alike. NGOs are trying to help.

In Russia, asylum seekers and refugees get no help with housing, or medical or social care. They must fend for themselves, and since they cannot work legally are prey to all kinds of abuse.

Of more than 200 Africans in North West Russia who have applied for asylum in the last 15 years, only 10 have been successful. At least 100 have been living precariously without legal status over the last eight years.

The humanitarian organization Icumbi ('hospitality' in the Kinerwandan language) was set up in 1996 by Valence Maniragena, a Rwandan/Russian citizen, to help African refugees and students in the North West region of Russia. The NGO operates from St Petersburg with minimal occasional funding from a couple of churches, the UNHCR, the DCA (Danish Church Aid) and the International Women's Club, and aims to offer practical help to African refugees in difficulty. It also lobbies the Russian government to take a more enlightened and humanitarian approach towards foreigners.



Intore, Icumbi's drumming and dancing group, set up by Valence with/for refugees to try to raise funds



Theodore (Icumbi Treasurer) and Brigitte play the African game Isigoro

John was a shop owner in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). He took part in a press conference which questioned the way the country was run. The police later ransacked his office. Warned by friends, he made his way to Brazzaville. Not safe there because of the DRC/Congo agreement on the compulsory return of refugees, he got a tourist visa and went to St Petersburg. There he requested political asylum at the Federal Migration Service (FMS). The UNHCR, after careful study of his file, said he should be given international protection. He waited four years for refugee status, but to no avail. A Russian court instructed the FMS to grant him refugee status, but this changed nothing. The UNHCR finally resettled him in the US.

Jeanne was invited to Russia by an acquaintance. A Rwandan refugee shuttled around to Zaire, Tanzania and Kenya, she fended off attempts to repatriate her by force, fearing she would be unsafe in her occupied country. She chose Russia because 'this is where a helping hand came from'. Mother of four, she obtained political asylum after nine months, almost the first case ever to be considered within a reasonable time. Unfortunately, as she secured her status in Russia, her husband, who had been living in Nairobi, died and left behind two adopted children. She managed after some time to get them to Russia. But she was only granted Russian citizenship 11 years after gaining refugee status. This meant that she has had to borrow money to put her children (not Russian citizens) through university instead of getting it free.

Anna and Joanna, two minor (under aged) young women, arrived in Russia from Ethiopia – a stroke of luck as they were initially bound for the sex trade in the Middle East. When they called on the FMS they were accused of falsifying their documents. A tribunal confirmed that they were minors and deserved protection. For more than four years they lived in St Petersburg without obtaining political asylum. The UNHCR eventually resettled them in the US.

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'Kitezh: A Community Approach to Raising Children in Russia'

by Dimitry Morozov

(Eland Publishing Ltd 2008)

One of my most haunting memories of Russia is of a visit to a large psychiatric institution on the outskirts of a poor provincial town. It was a catch-all dumping ground for people with disabilities ranging from cerebral palsy or a need for geriatric care to extreme psychotic disorders. One young man had no apparent disability or illness. He had been brought up in state orphanages (as was the case with many Russian 'orphans', his parents were alive, but alcoholism had rendered them incapable of bringing up their child) and was so institutionalised that he could not cope with living or working in society. The psychiatric hospital was the only place he could live in as an adult.

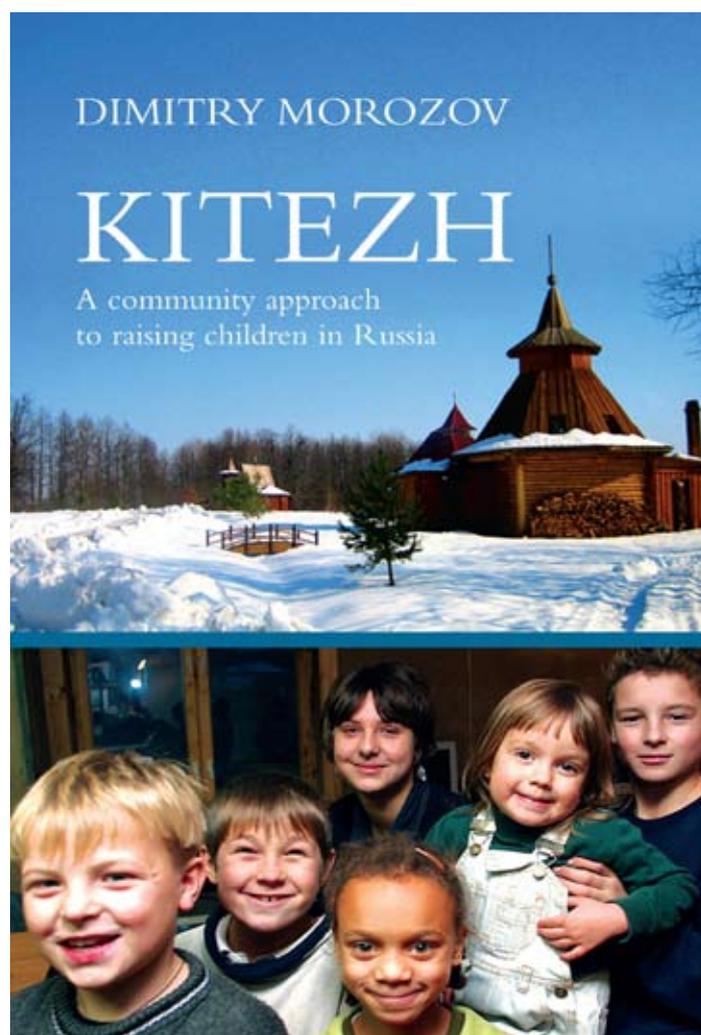
As Dimitry Morozov records in his beautifully written – and translated – book, the Kitezh community was founded to try to provide an alternative and better life for the orphans of Russia, whose numbers are estimated at one million. Most are less fortunate than the young man in the hospital. On official figures, half of the children who leave orphanages are 'high risk', and fall into homelessness, unemployment, crime and prostitution – with ten per cent committing suicide within three years.

At the age of 33, 'in a state of creative insanity', Morozov gave up his life as a Moscow-based historian and journalist to build his community, a child-centred village, in fields near Kaluga. Many other idealistic communities set up in the 1990s have withered and gone. Morozov tells how the pioneers of Kitezh started with no more than a vague idea and few resources; learned from their own mistakes, which he is at pains to describe, and also from the experience of others, particularly in Britain; and developed a therapeutic community, grouping foster families with competent adults in an environment where children could develop their abilities and their individuality.

I feared that Morozov's book would be heavy going for a layman. I was wrong. It reads like a novel, a voyage of discovery. Morozov interleaves his own story – how he learned to cope with dreadfully damaged young people – with their case histories, some told very movingly in their own words. It is a tale of a charismatic idealist tilting against the rigid orthodoxy of a deeply conservative society.

*Reviewed by Sir Roderic Lyne,
former British Ambassador in Moscow*

Kitezh has now founded a second village, Orion. Anyone who has seen the fate of so many Russian orphans ('many immediately imagine a stray mini-gangster, dirty, aggressive and ill-bred', writes Morozov, 'but once they arrive here, they cease being orphans') will fervently hope that the Kitezh exemplar will inspire others.



NEW BEARR TRUSTEES

New Trustees for BEARR

The BEARR Trust is delighted to welcome three new Trustees who are all well placed to make an important contribution to our work.

Jenny Norton

Jenny brings to BEARR a whole range of experience new to the Trust, particularly of Central Asia and the Caucasus and the media.

Jenny studied Russian at Leeds University and spent two years in Moscow tracking the progress of glasnost and perestroika in Gorbachev's Russia. She joined the BBC in 1972 as an editor for the BBC Monitoring Service in Caversham, and then moved to Tashkent to head Monitoring's Central Asia bureau. After returning to London she joined the World Service at Bush House in London, working as joint head of the Central Asia and Caucasus Service, and then as editor of the Russian Service's main morning programme for the FSU.

Jenny's BBC career has taken her on many reporting trips to Central Asia and the Caucasus, covering the violence in Andijan in Uzbekistan in 1995 and being one of the first foreign journalists to cross the border into Abkhazia after the war between Georgia and Russia in 2007.

Jenny is also a programme associate with the charity Conciliation Resources, running media-related projects in Abkhazia and Nagorny Karabakh.



Dr Christopher Gerry

Chris brings to BEARR not only expertise in our area of interest but also important links into the academic world. Participants in recent conferences will remember his major contributions to them.

Chris is a Senior Lecturer in Political Economy at University College London, where his research in health and welfare in Russia, Eastern Europe and Eurasia has resulted in publications in leading outlets on topics relating to poverty, inequality, health, vulnerability and democracy. His current research examines the explanations for mortality patterns across the region and the role of alcohol in understanding well-being in Russia. He teaches Russian Political Economy, European Macroeconomics and



Health, Development and Welfare, and supervises PhD students in related areas.

Chris is currently also involved as a research coordinator in a Medical Research Council study examining the sexual behaviour and attitudes of East Europeans in London. He has been instrumental in working to establish networks and partnerships between UCL and academic institutions across the region and, as a result, UCL is currently supported by the EU in leading a consortium of universities involving partners from Russia and Eastern Europe.

Away from work, Chris has travelled extensively across Russia and Eurasia (the photo shows him in the Kyrgyz Republic).

Robert Scallon

Robert brings to BEARR extensive links with the world of business and finance, and will help strengthen our financial expertise. He is familiar with BEARR's work, having been a Friend since at least 1999.

Robert had a career in finance and banking, which included three years resident in Moscow in the Brezhnev era, and in the period 1987-97 made many visits to Moscow, St Petersburg, Kiev, Tashkent, Almaty, Ashkhabad, Baku, Tbilisi and Bishkek. His first visit to Moscow was in 1964. He was on the Advisory Committee of the Know How Fund in the 90s and a Board Member of the British Consultants' Bureau in the same period. He is a consultant with the British Exporters' Association and is Secretary of the London Countertrade Roundtable. He is also involved with the concept of employee share-ownership, sitting on a number of committees.

Robert has been Honorary Treasurer of HealthProm for four years, and before that was Honorary Treasurer of the Russo-British Chamber of Commerce for eight years. With all this, he has little leisure time for travel, music and golf!

At the same time, we are sad to lose two Trustees, Francis Callaway and Sarah Philps, who have had to resign for personal and family reasons. We will all remember Francis's epic sponsored ride on behalf of BEARR, and will miss her in-depth knowledge of Kazakhstan; and Sarah's extensive experience of children's issues in Russia. We wish them both well and hope they will remain in close contact with their BEARR friends.



The Promise continued from page 11

time they get non-medical support for their child. Together the Portage worker and the parent/carer are able to celebrate small successes and look to the future with optimism. Many of the Portage workers have become advocates on behalf of 'their' children, helping families to access places at kindergartens, medical support etc.

Since the first three-day Portage Workshop in September 2005, many people with an interest in children with special needs have been introduced to the concept of Portage, and over the past two years, ThePromise has been training a group of Russian trainers to be able to deliver this training in the future. ThePromise has initiated discussions with the Department for Social Protection in Ryazan with a view to getting Portage recognised and funded in state-run institutions. Getting the authorities to consider funding Portage is a slow and challenging process – this was also the case when Portage was introduced into the UK. ThePromise has developed links with potential partner organisations in Moscow, Ukraine, Belarus and Tajikistan, and works closely with Our Children, a Ryazan NGO which supports children with



Lera developing her fine motor skills. The significant progress made during her Portage sessions has meant Lera's mother and her Portage worker, Nina, have persuaded the authorities to let Lera attend mainstream school.

special needs and their families. Our Children aims to establish a Portage service from their centre in Ryazan in the near future. As ThePromise's programmes are fully established, it is hoped that this model of best practice can be replicated in other institutions and communities in Russia and the former Soviet Union.

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The BEARR Trust Annual Conference 2009

This year's conference will be held, again in Southwark, on 20 November, under the title '**Twenty Years On: Children and NGOs in Russia and the Region**'. The conference marks the 20th anniversary of the UN Declaration on the Rights of the Child. The aim will be to look back and see how children in our region have fared over the last 20 years, and review their prospects for the next 20; and to look at how NGOs have adapted and will need to adapt further to the changing environment in which they work.

Conference speakers will include Russian and British experts who can give an authoritative survey of the field, and a number of NGOs (including Everychild, Downside Up, Our Family and the Belarusian Children's Hospice)

which have survived the last 20 years and are set to continue into the future as an established feature of the landscape of care for disadvantaged children.

A new feature at this year's conference will be a 'poster session'. We are setting aside a session in which individual participants can speak to smaller groups about their activities, their NGO, their experience or their research. Posters are not compulsory – participants can also bring leaflets, laptops or any other material that is easy to handle.

Those on our mailing-list will be sent further information in due course. If you would like to hear from us and are not currently on our mailing-list, please let us know at info@bearr.org.



Some lighter moments at the CEELBAS/BEARR Conference in June

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 work in the UK, Russia and Eurasia. The BEARR Trust cannot be held responsible for the views expressed by authors in their articles.

About The BEARR Trust

Patrons: The Duchess of Abercorn, Vladimir Ashkenazy, Elena Bashkirova Barenboim, Lady Fall, Myra Green OBE, Professor Geoffrey Hosking, HE Sir Roderic Lyne KBE CMG, Sir Jonathan Miller CBE, Anthony Oppenheimer, Rair Simonyan, 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 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
- lobbying with and on behalf of organisations that share our objectives.

Trustees: Megan Bick, Christopher Gerry, Daryl Hardman, Marcia Levy, Ann Lewis CMG, Tony Longrigg CMG (Chairman), Jenny Norton, Nicola Ramsden, Robert Scallon

Staff: Information Officer: Renate Wright

Volunteers: Ute Chatterjee, Martin Edwards, Janet Gunn, Julia Hudson, Antony Lewis, Philip Michaelson

Newsletter: Editor: Ann Lewis; layout: Leila Carlyle

Registered charity no: 1011086

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Support BEARR's work in health and welfare, get 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.

Please subscribe and pay through our website at www.bearr.org, or fill in the form below and send your cheque and form to The BEARR Trust office. Ideally, please pay by Banker's/Standing Order or direct transfer – this eases our administrative burden.

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