

THE BEARR TRUST Newsletter

The BEARR Trust: Supporting vulnerable people in Eastern Europe,
Central Asia and the Caucasus
No 71, September 2018



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BEARR's Small Grants Scheme 2018: Outcome

The BEARR Small Grants Scheme 2018 invited bids for grants for projects aimed at improving the employability of young people (aged 16-30) with mental or physical disabilities.

Grants were offered to organisations in any of the countries which BEARR covers: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Russia, Ukraine, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

The Trust received a large number of applications for grants this year, showing the urgent need in the area chosen.

Grants were offered as follows:

Friends House Moscow (Russia, Moscow) for the project **'My Route to an Occupation'**. The NGO will assist disabled young people to choose an occupation and prepare for their jobs, including assisting with social integration where necessary. In the longer term the NGO hopes to establish a system for disabled young people aged 18-30, involving training, inter-departmental coordination and a bank of information and training materials.

BelAPDliMi (Belarus, Minsk) for the project **'Identification of opportunities, development of work skills and accompanied employment for young people with disabilities'**. The project will enable at least 20 people with disabilities to receive the service of accompanied employment, and at least 30 people will receive consulting and training services.

KEDEM (Moldova, Chisinau) for the project **'Find Yourself'**. KEDEM plans to work with professionals, associates of NGOs, specialists who work with people with disabilities, and employers, as well as people with disabilities, who are ready to share their experience. A 2-day retreat will create a list of companies ready to hire people with disabilities.

Psychoanalytic Association (Kazakhstan, Almaty) for the project **'Training Café'**. They plan to organise a School of Social Entrepreneurship

and Psychosocial Rehabilitation – a 6-day school for 100 specialists from Kazakhstan and elsewhere in Central Asia – to provide participants with methods and techniques for opening social enterprises to involve young people with disabilities and expand employment opportunities.

Mayuboni Tavono (Tajikistan, Jonvarsuz) for the project **'Training of professional skills for young people with disabilities'**. The NGO plans to introduce professional skills for 30 young people with physical and mental disabilities in order to help reduce unemployment. Young people will learn traditional crafts (knitting, weaving, embroidery) alongside business planning and marketing skills.

TajRupt (Tajikistan, Khujand) for the project **'Enabling Tajikistani Youth with Physical Disabilities to Become Translators'**. TajRupt intends to train 80 young people with physical disabilities who have demonstrated an interest in the English language to become translators and find employment.

Open Doors (Ukraine, Nikopol) for the project **'The employment of young people with physical and mental disabilities as an important way to realise their right to work'**. The NGO will organise seminars for employment centres and centres for social services on implementing the constitutional right to work of young people with physical and mental disabilities in Dnipropetrovsk region. They also intend to organise public reception facilities and a free legal advice hotline on employment of young people with disabilities.

Centre for Strategic Initiatives (Ukraine, Khmelnytskyi) for the project **'Good chances for good changes'**. The centre will organise baking classes and training on packaging baked goods, for young people with disabilities. They will also provide assistance in selling goods produced as a result of the training.

Aratta (Ukraine, Chernihiv) for the project **'Productive Life'**. The grant will be used to provide twenty people aged 16-30 with mental and physical disabilities with market-required skills such as English, IT, hair styling and manicure. They will also conduct a series of educational events aimed at empowering people with disabilities with basic knowledge about human rights and employment legislation.

Public organisation of parents of children with Down Syndrome (Ukraine, Lutsk) for the project **'Providing social support and support in the workplace for people with Down Syndrome'**. The NGO will organise training for young people with disabilities and their parents, as well as potential employers. They will arrange for internships for candidates in the workplace under the supervision of a social worker, a job coach and a psychologist.

ZtRASS (Ukraine, Zhytomyr) for the project **'Through innovation to equal opportunities'**. As a result of the project, 40 young people with special needs will acquire the skills required for self-employment and the organisation of their businesses.

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

Reports on projects funded through last year's Small Grants Scheme can be found on pages 9 to 15.

The Small Grants Scheme 2018 is funded by donations from Just Trust, The Funding Network, Solidarity with Russia and other supporters, to whom we are most grateful.

New Chairman for BEARR

In June Nicola Ramsden took over from Robert Brinkley as Chairman of The BEARR Trust. The Trustees are immensely grateful to Robert for his contribution to the Trust's development over his six years in office and are confident Nicola will be a worthy successor. We asked outgoing and incoming Chairman for their thoughts on this occasion.

Robert Brinkley

It seems no time at all since September 2012, when I was offering some thoughts in the Newsletter as incoming Chairman of The BEARR Trust. I agreed to take on the position for three years, and then another three. After six years, it was time for me to pass on the baton, much as I was enjoying the role. I am delighted that the Trustees have chosen Nicola Ramsden to succeed me. I know that she will steer BEARR very capably in the coming years.

BEARR has survived – and thrived – for 27 years, and is able to keep on helping vulnerable groups in the former Soviet countries, through the commitment of its people. Trustees freely give many hours of their time, and some have helped BEARR financially too, when it faced hard times. They are ably supported by a network of volunteers and two excellent part-time staff. To them all I offer my heartfelt thanks.



A five-year grant by a charitable foundation, from 2016 to 2020, has given BEARR greater financial stability. But we have been very conscious of the need to keep working at raising funds, and to ensure that BEARR has income from a variety of sources. I am very grateful to all those organisations and individuals who give generously to enable BEARR to support voluntary groups in the region. Thanks to the commitment of our Trustees and volunteers, BEARR's ratio of administration costs to overall expenditure remains remarkably low.

Particularly memorable for me was the two day conference which BEARR organised in May 2016 at the Ukrainian Catholic University in Lviv for NGOs supporting people displaced by conflict in Ukraine. The participants included over 50 NGO representatives, some themselves recently displaced, who eagerly seized the opportunity to get to know and learn from others working in this field. Such conferences in the region can have a powerful multiplier effect among local NGOs. I am glad that BEARR is now planning the next one.

There is still a huge need to support the small health and welfare groups doing their best to help the most vulnerable people in Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia. BEARR

is the only British charity working in this region which combines grant-giving and networking activities. BEARR was a pioneer and remains unique. It enjoys goodwill and a reputation out of proportion to its modest size. I look forward to keeping in touch with BEARR and continuing to support it.

Nicola Ramsden

I met some of BEARR's inspiring founders when I moved to work in Moscow in 1992.

They were among the people who responded with concern and generosity to the difficult living conditions faced by citizens of newly independent countries after the Soviet Union dissolved. The desire to support health and social welfare improvements in all these countries – across Eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia – has remained the constant theme of BEARR's work since then.



I'm proud to have been part of it. I worked in several of these countries in the early 1990s, and at the same time kept in touch with the people running BEARR. When I returned to England in 1997 I became a trustee of BEARR, and now I feel honoured to have been chosen to succeed Robert Brinkley as Chairman.

Robert is a tough act to follow, but a reassuring one. Under his chairmanship, BEARR has increased its resilience through multi-year funding, expanded its Small Grants Scheme, and broken new ground with conferences held outside the UK, in one of the region's countries. I'm looking forward to building on all of these achievements over the next few years.

In particular, I'm looking forward to working with my fellow Trustees. Another of Robert's valuable legacies is to have built a Trustee group that brings in people with a wide range of experience and skills, and it is the key to BEARR's impact. Most of our modest funding is spent on charitable activities – information sharing and small grants – and this is only possible because of the work done voluntarily by the Trustees. We also benefit from having a distinguished and supportive group of Patrons (now including Robert himself!) Last, but certainly not least, we have two talented, multi-lingual Information Officers who are often a first point of contact with BEARR.

We have evolved and adapted over the years. If you were to ask me where I hope BEARR's efforts will now lead, I would emphasise one theme which is emerging from our present work: the encouragement of local leadership in the voluntary sectors of the countries we support.

AIDS Amsterdam 2018: an East European and Central Asian perspective

Daria Alexeeva **EECA at AIDS2018 project manager** **AFEW International**

The 5th objective of the International AIDS Conference in Amsterdam 2018 was to ‘Spotlight the state of the epidemic and the HIV response in Eastern Europe and Central Asia (EECA) with a focus on investments, structural determinants and services’.

AFEW International, with the support of the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Eurasian Association of Harm Reduction (EHRA), the adolescents’ network Teenergizer, and the Global Network of people living with HIV (GNP+) ran a 2-year advance programme to make sure that this objective was achieved, not only by highlighting the issues in the conference programme, but by supporting increased participation by EECA delegates in AIDS2018.

And we did it! On 22-27 July 2018 the Amsterdam Convention Centre was invaded by Russian-speakers (Russian being their lingua franca). Each plenary session had a speaker from the region to highlight their challenges, and lots of sessions featured the health crisis in EECA countries. More than 35 sessions had Russian interpreting. The EECA networking zone – ActivEast – was one of the busiest zones, with more than 50 sessions during the conference, all led by community leaders. It hosted the EECA Campaign ‘Chase the virus not people!’ launched at AIDS2018 by all the region’s community networks, who joined forces in response to the current situation to urge the world to overcome discrimination and the stigmatisation of key populations.

EECA at AIDS2018 in numbers

Compared with AIDS2016, EECA representation increased from 3.9% to 10.5% at all activities included in the official programme. There were 16 EECA speakers, 5% of the total.

At the end of 2017 AFEW International, with the support of many partners including The BEARR Trust, built a pool of mentors to help EECA authors develop their abstracts, providing expert support on content, editing and translation. Thanks to this effort, abstracts submitted were triple the number of those at AIDS2016 (627 abstracts submitted), and thanks to the mentors’ support the quality improved substantially, increasing the chance of acceptance. 187 abstracts from the EECA region were accepted (a six-fold increase). The acceptance rate was 30%, matching the average rate for all regions. 164 scholarships were granted to delegates from the EECA region or 13% of all International AIDS Society (IAS) scholarships (a four-fold increase).

A personal angle:

Elena Shastina, from Orenburg in Russia, is President of New Life, a non-profit organisation for the prevention of socially significant diseases. HIV became part of her life 20 years ago, at a time when people didn’t know the difference between HIV and AIDS. She has experienced diverse tough situations, at times surviving difficult domestic and psychological dramas. This gives Lena a perfect understanding of the needs of the people she works with.

This was her first international conference. She was one of very few to have an abstract submitted late accepted. She used the support of the mentors’ pool to develop her initial abstract, which was based on her organisation’s research into why women do not stick with ARV treatment.

“I was putting all my effort into developing my abstract. Really! The topic was very relevant, our findings important. If published, my research conclusions would also be a very serious tool for advocacy. And when I found my abstract wasn’t accepted, I was really frustrated. At the EECA regional conference in Moscow, however, AFEW told us that we could still submit a late entry. I improved my abstract, added new data and – bingo! – it got accepted. And I also got a scholarship to present it at the conference. I felt this was well deserved!

But then I got scared. It was a huge responsibility to present a paper, in English, in another country. I pulled myself together and started to prepare. Luckily, AFEW ensured all sessions relevant for EECA delegates had interpreters, so I drew up my presentation in English but knew I could speak in Russian.

I had dreamed of Amsterdam since I was 17 – a 22-year dream! So I packed and set off. My fears completely evaporated when I arrived at Schiphol Airport: Daria Alexeeva met me there, which gave me comfort and confidence. Then came two days of training before AIDS2018, and work on perfecting my presentation.

And then there was the March ... with a capital M. Because it united people from all over the world, and above all, the EECA region was part of it, part of the call for a world without stigma, with equal rights and access to quality treatment, a healthy future, which we are building together. I walked with the banners along the streets of this amazing city together with amazing people, friends and colleagues, shouting the slogan of our campaign – ‘Chase the virus, not people!’ That was incredible.





My presentation was scheduled for the first day of the conference in the session 'Lost in transition: challenges of domestic funding for HIV and human rights'. I was the sixth speaker. I listened to the first five and thought: what am I doing here?? They were speaking of giant numbers, huge budgets, the Global Fund... And here was I with my story about women who stop taking the pills after they have had their baby, unaware that this is their path to death. Global politics versus a woman with a baby on her breast....

I was also very nervous because of the language barrier. I greeted the public in English and confessed that my English was not great, and urged everybody to don headsets for the interpretation. But they didn't seem to understand what I meant! People started leaving the room, and I was in despair thinking that nobody wanted to listen to my presentation ...

Somebody asked what language the slides were in. I murmured 'English'. And then people started coming back into the room. They had just gone out to get their headsets!

And then I started to talk. And I adjusted my speech to fit nicely into the theme of the session, sharing the results of my research and holding the Russian government accountable for the failure of treatment for HIV positive women. I felt calm, as if I were looking at myself from the outside. And there were questions, and colleagues who had come to support me told me I had done really well, much better than at the pre-meeting in Moscow. I felt satisfied and fulfilled.

And to be honest, that was the only session I attended from start to finish. The conference programme was so diverse, and I wanted to see as much as I could, so I was literally running from one session or meeting to another.

Then there was a closing rapporteur session, which highlighted all the major events of the conference. And then I understood that however hard I had tried, there was a lot of important and much needed information that I had missed.

And then I watched the sun set over the North Sea, walked in the red light district and the narrow streets of the old city till 3 am, sometimes surrounded by crowds and sometimes all alone. I dropped a coin in the canal hoping it would bring me back to this city one day.

Thanks AFEW, thanks AIDS2018 and thanks Amsterdam – for all the new experiences, impressions and people."

P.S. My abstract has been published in the AIDS2018 abstract book, № TUAD0308LB, page 107.

Forthcoming BEARR events

The BEARR Trust Annual Conference

This will be on 16 November 2018 at CAN-Mezzanine, 32-36 Loman Street, London SE1 0EH.

The theme will be:

'Disability and Inclusion in Eastern Europe and Central Asia'

We will be looking at issues such as attitudes to people with disabilities, stigma, inclusive education and training, leaving care, accommodation, supported living, accessibility, and employment and employers.

We are expecting speakers from Ukraine, Belarus, Moldova, Uzbekistan, Russia, Armenia and other countries of the region.

Lunch will be provided. There will be ample opportunities for questions and discussion and for networking. We hope you will join us!

For further information and booking form, go to <http://www.bearr.org/bearr-trust-annual-conference-16-november-2018>

Possible conference in Moldova, spring 2019

BEARR is discussing with the Free University of Moldova the possibility of organising a joint conference in Chisinau next spring.

The discussions are likely to centre round the implications of demographic trends and the pattern of migration. The aim would be to bring together NGOs in Moldova, Belarus and Ukraine which are engaged in tackling some of the health and welfare issues arising from these trends, exchanging information and expertise and creating networks.

Disability and Development in Uzbekistan

Towards a barrier-free and inclusive society for all

Dilmurad Yusupov
Institute of Development Studies,
University of Sussex

My first direct encounter with disabled people happened almost five years ago when I started my first job as a Project Assistant at Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA)'s Uzbekistan office on the project 'Improving the Social Protection and Rehabilitation of Disabled People in Uzbekistan'.

At that time, I could never have imagined that this work experience would end up with a doctoral project on disability and development in Uzbekistan, which I started in September 2017 at the Institute of Development Studies (IDS), University of Sussex. Before the JICA project I had never in my life met a disabled person. And this made me think hard about why we rarely saw them in 'normal' society.

After completing the JICA project in June 2014, I maintained a working relationship with the disabled women who had participated in the project, which eventually led to the establishment of an NGO, Sharoit Plus, the Public Association of Disabled People of Tashkent City in December 2016. Sharoit in Uzbek means 'environment, condition, opportunities' and 'Plus' means improving all these to create an accessible and inclusive society for all. To achieve this long-term goal Sharoit Plus members are using the knowledge and skills they gained through the JICA project to empower disabled people in Uzbekistan. For instance, the core of their activities consists of Disability Equality Training, peer-counselling and independent living services for disabled and non-disabled audiences.

The experience of these last five years has enabled me to discover that 'disability' is not just a medical problem but rather a complex social phenomenon which requires a multidisciplinary analytical approach. In Uzbekistan disability is conflated with physical dysfunction caused by various impairments, while state efforts are directed towards returning disabled people to a 'normal' condition through medical rehabilitation. Current

practices are largely influenced by Soviet disability policies, which were based on the institutionalisation of disabled people. The purpose of my current research project is to explore the potential of community-based inclusive development in Uzbekistan as an alternative to institutionalisation by initiating participatory action research with people with physical, learning, visual and hearing impairments.

It should be said that this research project is not solely my idea but a collaborative project with my colleagues at Sharoit Plus, who are acting as my co-researchers. Up to now we have interviewed more than 40 people with various impairments in Tashkent city and its region, and have just started a co-operative inquiry consisting of a series of participatory workshops with disabled people from each category, with about 10 participants in each group. We are using participatory video as a collective method of inquiry to disseminate the unheard voices of disabled people in Uzbekistan. The objectives of this project are to understand how Soviet disability policies and practices plus Islamic culture in post-Soviet Uzbekistan are shaping current concepts of disability, and to elucidate the role of the mahalla – a local self-governing body consisting of several neighbourhoods which is quite unique and has a long history in Central Asia in promoting inclusion or preventing the social exclusion of vulnerable people.

Like any other newly established NGO Sharoit Plus is facing many challenges along its path to promoting a barrier free and inclusive society in Uzbekistan. The fact that the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) has not yet been ratified by Uzbekistan is impeding the process of implementation of the rights of disabled people and the adoption of a policy of treating the problem as a rights-based and social issue rather than a purely charity or medical issue. Many disabled people's organisations in Uzbekistan, which are usually run by non-disabled people, still think of 'disability' mainly as a charity issue and model their activities on this widespread understanding. However, Sharoit Plus does not pursue charity as its main goal but is trying to empower disabled people through changing societal attitudes and fighting for reasonable accommodation and an accessible environment for them. Finally, the organisation lacks the necessary financial support to fully realise its potential and is therefore seeking grant opportunities and fruitful cooperation with disabled people's organisations and donors abroad.



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Country Profile: Uzbekistan

Uzbekistan, with a population of 32 million, is spread across a double-landlocked (one of only two such countries) territory roughly the size of Sweden. Located in Central Asia, it is bordered by Turkmenistan to the South-West, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan to the East, Kazakhstan to the West, North and North-East. It has a short border with Afghanistan in the South, the Northern border runs through the Aral Sea and the capital city, Tashkent – with a population of 2.5 million – is located in the North-East.

Almost 80% of Uzbekistan is desert, dominated by the Kyzyl Kum Desert of the North and Central parts of the country. To the South-East and North-East the foothills of the Tian Shan Range reach 4,500 metres, while the Fergana Valley, where the bulk of the population and economic activity are located, hosts most of the arable land, accounting for 10% of total land.

Economic development

During the Soviet era, intensive production of ‘white gold’ (cotton) and grain resulted in the infamous overuse of agrochemicals, the catastrophic destruction of the Aral Sea and the depletion of water supplies. Since independence, in 1991, agricultural production has been diversified but agriculture has remained concentrated around cotton production and Uzbekistan is the 5th largest exporter and 7th largest producer of cotton. Economic growth in the 1990s and 2000s was driven through state-led investments in export-oriented projects related to gas, gold and cotton. The associated foreign policy earnings allowed President Karimov, to maintain a rigid, state-controlled and internationally isolated economy. His successor, in 2016, Shavkat Mirziyoyev, has initiated economic reform efforts aimed at integrating Uzbekistan into the world economy, specifically by seeking to attract Foreign Direct Investment, while promoting the growth of small and medium enterprises.

Health and welfare

Uzbekistan is one of the world’s poorest countries (8th poorest according to 2018 projected data) and faces major challenges in providing health and healthcare to its population.

There have been several major health reforms covering health care provision, governance and financing, since independence. Primary care in rural areas has been over-hauled, while specialized polyclinics in urban areas are being converted into general polyclinics in line with best practice. Secondary care is financed on the basis of past expenditure, input requirements and, increasingly, through user fees, while primary care has moved to an output-linked capitation system. Health care provision has principally remained in public ownership, with slowly increasing public spending under-scoring a basic benefits package of primary care, emergency care and selected care for certain disease and population categories. Secondary



care and pharmaceutical products are not covered for most of the population and, combined with the growing role of out-of-pocket payments, this results in substantial inequities and widespread catastrophic expenditure requirements for households. Along with the variable quality of care, these access inequities, represent the main health care challenges.

Health data (2016)

	Uzb	Russ	UK
Life expectancy (male)	70	66	80
Life expectancy (female)	75	77	83
Death rates per 100,000			
Heart disease	325	292	57
Stroke	84	167	27
Hypertension	53	5.5	2.5
Liver disease	32	0.3	8.2
Diabetes	26	4.3	4.7
Due to low birth weight	15	4.3	2.5

Heart disease and stroke remain the main causes of mortality and premature mortality in Uzbekistan with rates (per 100,000) that dwarf those experienced in Western Europe. Heart disease (ischemic and hypertensive) is of particular concern as Uzbekistan is in the world’s top five in both categories – reflecting the unhealthy life styles which define the main risk factors facing the population: high blood pressure, poor diet, high cholesterol and excessive use of alcohol and drugs. Improved promotion of public health and more investment in the healthcare system are urgently needed if Uzbekistan’s poor health outcomes are to be improved.

Information and data for this article are taken from:

<https://tinyurl.com/g6rzg> and www.worldlifeexpectancy.com

The BEARR Trust is grateful to Dr Chris Gerry of Oxford University, a former Trustee, for compiling his illuminating country profiles over the years. He has now completed the set.

NGO Profile: R.O.O.F. St. Petersburg

The R.O.O.F. St. Petersburg charity was established in Manchester in 1989 to assist homeless children in its sister-city St. Petersburg, linked since 1962 by the 'Ties of Friendship' agreement.

With the fall of the Soviet Union, the situation in Russian children's homes had become particularly acute, as the state subsidies on which they depended dwindled. The charity established that the priority was to send basic medicines and articles of hygiene, nappies, baby cream, children's analgesics, and children's clothes. As more of these became available in Russia itself, R.O.O.F.'s focus shifted to sending funds to buy these things via its trustee in St. Petersburg.

To assist in raising funds, in 1992 we established the R.O.O.F. St. Petersburg Annual Charity Concerts featuring our Kalinka Youth Balalaika Orchestra and invited guests. Since then, the concerts have raised over £35,000, which has provided a range of necessities for a number of children's homes, notably for the Lomonosov Children's Home, e.g. beds, chairs, potties, toys, and an industrial washing machine and drier.

R.O.O.F. has also worked with the St. Petersburg charity Parents' Bridge, established in 1985 by a remarkable couple, Marina and Oleg Levin, in the days when non-governmental organisations were actively discouraged by the Soviet regime. In a country where it is rare for families to have more than one or two children, the Levins eventually had seven, five of whom were adopted. (Adoption was uncommon and practically frowned upon, orphans and homeless children normally being left in state children's homes). Parents' Bridge actually championed adoption, and now has a well-established screening programme for prospective adoptive parents.

Amongst the programmes which R.O.O.F. St. Petersburg has supported is one which supplies basic foodstuffs (flour, sugar, pasta, etc.) to needy adoptive families to help them to stay together and hopefully avoid the children being sent back to live on the streets again.

Over recent years, financial cuts in educational projects have meant the Kalinka Balalaika Orchestra is obliged nowadays to spread its fund-raising activities to cover not only R.O.O.F. but also to keep the orchestra itself

in existence. As a result, this has meant a fall in the income it generates for the charity, and a change of focus on the part of the charity to fund less expensive projects within its budget.

Accordingly, R.O.O.F. St. Petersburg now concentrates on providing:

1. Sets of bedding for young people leaving the security of their children's homes to start a new life on the outside at the age of 16.
2. A Christmas/New Year's party for adopted children and their families living in deprived circumstances who cannot afford any celebrations of their own, organised by Parents' Bridge.

The two remaining trustees of R.O.O.F. St. Petersburg have taken the decision to close the charity, but would like to continue their established projects within the framework of a larger well-established charity working in a similar area, and would welcome any suggestions from readers.

In a country with widespread poverty, and social problems – particularly connected with alcoholism – there is still a pressing need for aid. The players of our Kalinka Orchestra, with soloists and guest performers will continue to do their bit – our next Annual Charity Concert will take place at the Royal Northern College of Music on Friday 7 December 2018. We'd love to see you there!

For further information about R.O.O.F. St. Petersburg and the Kalinka Youth Balalaika Orchestra,

Contact

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Also on Facebook – Kalinka Balalaika Orchestra



Small Grants Scheme 2017: Mental health project reports

New skills and perspectives for at-risk children in St Petersburg

Grantee: Ulica Mira, St Petersburg, with St Petersburg Foundation 'New Steps' Project: Crisis psychological intervention for children who have experienced abuse and neglect

The charitable non-governmental organisation Ulica Mira has been working with children and young people from at-risk groups in St. Petersburg since 2000. Our programmes are aimed at the rehabilitation and social integration of such children and young people. We work to create the favourable environment for the emotional and social development children need for safe and responsible living now and in the future, and for their wellbeing.

Our main objectives are: to provide social and psychological support for at-risk children and their families; to provide circus training as an alternative to life on the streets; and to provide educational support and assistance.

We specifically target children drifting between the street and their family. We strive to prevent these at-risk children from the horrors of a permanent life on the street, offering an alternative to street life and engaging them in vigorous circus training, creating favourable conditions for their all-

round development. Currently there are 30 children aged 7 to 19 involved in our programmes. Most of these children come from disadvantaged and underprivileged families. The circus training involves juggling, acrobatics and other skills, and the children give performances in concerts and at festivals. All this helps motivate them to engage with the rest of the programme.

The project supported by The BEARR Trust aimed to help children who have been abused and neglected overcome the emotional and behavioural consequences of CAN (child abuse and neglect) and its associated symptoms of trauma, develop the coping and social skills needed for safe living in the future, and improve family functioning and the family environment. The project benefitted 21 children aged 8-16 who have experienced abuse and/or neglect, and their families; and 13 adolescents and young people aged 15-21 who have experienced trauma or crisis.

The project continued for 17 weeks from September to December 2017 and included two 2-hour group therapy sessions per week for the children, one 4-hour group therapy session per week for the adolescents and young people, and individual and family counselling for the children and their parents, plus four sessions per week of circus training.

The children were selected for the programme by a trained

social worker based on their history of abuse and neglect, and in cooperation with child protection agencies in Petrogradskiy and Vasileostrovskiy districts in St. Petersburg, children's orphanages and schools.

During the group therapy sessions the children received short-term trauma-focused therapy, which provided a safe and structured environment in which to share their experiences of abuse and neglect, get emotional support from other children and therapists, work through their feelings, discuss their current difficulties and fears, and find the resources to overcome the consequences of their traumatic experiences. In addition, children discussed the different types of abuse and violent behaviour, how they can identify them and protect themselves, and ways to avoid abusive and violent interactions on their own part.

The work with teenagers and young people focused on the following issues: physical, psychological and sexual abuse, bullying, self-harm, emotional crisis, loss of loved ones, acute stress.

Each child had an opportunity to have individual therapy as well, to work through problems and experiences that he or she couldn't bring up during group meetings and/or to get additional help and support. When the situation permitted, both children and their parents participated in individual and/or family counselling.

Initially, we planned a weekly 3-hour group therapy session for the parents of participating children. However, it soon became clear that many of the



Human rights in the field of mental health

parents suffered from alcohol or drug addiction and were not committed to or capable of participating in regular group work. Parents were then encouraged to participate in individual or family counselling to the best of their ability. Eight children in the programme were either orphans or lived in orphanages with no family support.

The children and young people were evaluated at the beginning and end of the programme for emotional, behavioural and social difficulties and symptoms. The final assessment yielded positive results from individual and group therapy for the participating children and young people: a qualitative and quantitative reduction in abuse or trauma related emotional and

behavioural problems, improved social and coping skills, and improved self-esteem. Some participating families saw noticeable improvements in parent-child interactions and the family environment, most a substantial reduction in abusive behaviour. Most of the families were in receipt of social support, which was needed to overcome the crisis or lay the groundwork for a long-term intervention.

It turned out that none of the participating children and young people had received any professional help or therapy related to abuse and trauma at any point before they entered the programme, although most had suffered long-term emotional and behavioural damage, often including self-destructive and at-risk behaviour. So this programme was essential to prevent suicidal and at-risk behaviour in the future.

The results of the project were presented in a seminar for professionals in the field and will hopefully be disseminated further and encourage both state agencies and NGOs to work on these problems and deficiencies.



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All photos by Ulica Mira staff

People suffering from mental illness also have rights

Grantee: Open Doors, Nikopol, Ukraine

Project: Respect for human rights in the field of mental health

Statistics show that 1.2 million people in Ukraine (more than 3% of the population) suffer from some mental illness, and the number is growing from year to year. Ukraine is in the top position in Europe for the number of people with mental disabilities or illnesses – almost 2 million people are treated by psychiatric hospitals every year.

One of the tasks of the project was to create a reception centre, which over a period of six months provided legal advice to those who needed it. The Open Doors Centre for Legal Aid was visited during that period by 30 individuals, either

carers or relatives of people with mental health issues. They had 45 consultations, as did 50 people with mental illness living in psychiatric hospitals or care homes in Dnepropetrovsk region, who received 70 legal advice sessions.

During the implementation of the project the monitoring group at Open Doors undertook ten monitoring visits – either by themselves or as part of the National Preventive Mechanism programme called Ombudsman Plus.

After one of the monitoring visits a prosecution for torture was initiated under Article 127 of the Criminal Code. As a result the director is threatened with

dismissal for having exploited the inmates of the home for slave labour. After the monitoring visit and publication of the findings the conditions in that institution improved and we hope that in future the rights of people with mental illness will be properly observed there. After that particular monitoring visit, which Open Doors carried out with representatives of the parliamentary human rights oversight body, the national TV channel Inter reported on the visit in its news programme. A broadcast such as that can reach 20 million viewers or more, and people must have been upset by what they saw, so we think that society at large now has a different attitude to people



IRYNA LOS (IN WHITE) AND OTHER MEMBERS OF THE OPEN DOORS TEAM MONITORING VYSHETARASOVSKIY PSYCHONEUROLOGICAL CARE HOME.

basis of the medical diagnosis. After the treatment, her cousin agreed to look after her and found her somewhere to live. Now she is living in Nikopol and has everything she needs for a normal life.

Another woman who came to our centre was the mother of an 18-year old with mental health issues. As she was now an adult, a court had

with mental illness, and has seen how such people are treated, in a way which is often barely human.

While we were implementing the project, a woman came to our public reception centre. She had suffered from mental and neurological issues from childhood, and had found herself in difficulties – her home was destroyed, her relatives did not want to take responsibility for her and she was living on the streets. Our experts talked to her, and got her properly examined medically, after which she was able to receive temporary palliative care at the local hospital on the

to decide on whether she was able to cope independently or to decide on her guardianship. Our experts, funded by this project, put the legal papers together and submitted them to the court. Problems arose in the course of obtaining a second medical opinion about her condition. After a request to the health department of Nikopol City Council, they undertook an inspection of her living conditions and after this the court decided that she should have a guardian.

Another woman living in Nikopol came to us about her 26-year-old daughter who

had a psychiatric disorder. Her own health was deteriorating seriously and she was worried about caring for her daughter. She wanted to have her placed in a psychiatric care home.

During our monitoring visits to such institutions, it turned out that we had inspected a home which was suitable for the daughter and was run like a family home. Our experts contacted the director of the home and the local authority's social services department and she will soon be able to go and live there.

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More dialogue, less stress

Grantee: NGO Arzanda, Khujand, Tajikistan

Project: Preventing mental stress through awareness-raising and improving social dialogue and capacity building in six target villages of Panjakent district

Nowadays, everyone is busy with their own obligations: parents are mostly busy at work and do not have enough time to talk to their children; children and young people are mostly involved with their phones and do not share daily activities with their parents. And social dialogue – understanding each other, being close to each other, having warm conversation – has been suffering in recent years, creating big gaps and separating us.

In implementing this project, Arzanda created strong social leaders called Promoters who played a major role, conducting awareness-raising activities with the communities of the six target villages in Panjakent district: Muguloni Bolo, Muguloni Poyon, Shingak, Ozodagon, Khujapanj, and Turkiroj.

After their training the Promoters were expected to teach others how to conduct

awareness-raising activities, explain ways of preventing stress and mental health issues, try to create a warm and communicative atmosphere within the communities, to lower the stress level by developing communication skills, talking, drawing, drinking tea together, listening to music, creating an atmosphere of relaxation and peacefulness.

Promoters played the key role in improving the social dialogues between households, communities, neighbours, schoolchildren and schoolteachers.

It is mostly vulnerable people who find themselves stressed.

This can be for different

reasons: their financial situation, unemployment, migration, family problems and many other issues. While talking with Promoters some beneficiaries want to cry, they enter into their problems so deeply that after



BREAKING DOWN STEREOTYPES WORKSHOP

Mental health among refugee women

the conversation they feel much better. Promoters do not discuss their problems in detail or tell anyone else but just have a warm conversation, explaining the causes of stress and associated mental health issues, trying to help the beneficiaries out of their stress situation. So, the project chose six local village Promoters from among active villagers during community meeting in the course of voting and trained them in conducting awareness-raising activities and developing social dialogue in their communities. The Promoters are leaders in their own villages.

Community Promoters mostly organised group conversations and face to face chats. They worked with marginalised populations, with lonely women, with migrants, with parents and problematic young people, mostly vulnerable populations in poor economic circumstances, and tried to lower their stress levels and mental health issues by means of open sessions, communication and improving the process of dialogue and face to face talk. During this short period the Promoters tried to break down stereotypes, reduce stress issues and improve social dialogue among households. Most conversations have been conducted with the different layers

of the communities, especially with young people who had failed their exams and other disaffected young people, with lonely women who were divorced or whose husband had died or left them or migrated, with deported migrants, with detainees (in prison), and with vulnerable people in a difficult financial situation. Altogether 493 people have benefitted from these activities, group conversations and face to face meetings.

In December 2017, the local Panjakent newspaper *Zarafshon* published information about the project, its funders, the contact details of Promoters, the activities and support that Promoters have been able to provide. The main purpose of the publication was to introduce and inform other neighbouring villages with local leaders. Nowadays, it is difficult to find specialists who can provide advice and conduct relevant activities in the field of stress reduction. With the support of the BEARR Trust



grant, Arzanda was able to enhance the knowledge of local activists and create strong leaders who can continue their work even after the end of project.

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Refugee Women and Children suffering from Armed Conflict

Grantee: Centre for Women in the Modern World, Baku, and Union of Women's Centres in Georgia

Project: Mental Health among Refugee Women in Azerbaijan and Georgia

The project was very useful for women in the South Caucasus. We want to thank the staff of the BEARR Trust for their support.

The project encompassed awareness-raising campaigns and assistance to women from different regions of Azerbaijan and Georgia, helping to build peace and actively promote women, and laying the foundation for democratic changes in the countries of the South Caucasus.

The project aimed to assist in solving mental problems and protecting women with high levels of social, emotional, personal and health care needs. The project was implemented in two countries in the South Caucasus where there is a concentration of displaced people (IDPs), and aimed to create a community of self-help groups at grassroots level.

Women and children suffer most from military conflict and any other armed

conflict. During periods of conflict, women as a rule work to preserve the social order. They make an important but often unrecognised contribution, acting as peace promoters in the family and in society as a whole.

Today in Azerbaijan, hundreds of thousands of people have been forced to leave their places of permanent residence because their lives and those of their loved ones are in danger. Many of them have been expelled from their houses or

apartments either by direct violence or through the creation of an atmosphere that makes ordinary day-to-day life impossible.

The problems of forced migrants include two important interdependent processes: on the one hand, the socio-psychological adaptation of migrants who have themselves survived a stressful, extreme situation, and on the other their need for material and socio-psychological assistance.

Our training programme mixed therapies and practical sessions, ranging from classroom-based lectures, films and interactive discussion to role-plays, how to use symptom cards, and practicing. Participants also received training

permanent places of residence and temporarily settled in more than 1600 locations in 62 cities and districts throughout the republic.

In addition, more than 100,000 people were forced to leave their places of permanent residence in Nagorno-Karabakh and the bordering regions – the Nakhichevan Autonomous Republic, Agjabadi, Agdam, Akstafa, Fuzuli, Terter, Goranboy, Gedabek, Kazakh and Taz – for safety reasons. Thus, in Azerbaijan there are about one million refugees, internally displaced persons, and people of refugee status. Rehabilitation involves implementing a set of measures aimed at liberating the individual from the stress and crisis in their lives caused by the change of residence, gaining knowledge of the new ethnic environment, and acquiring the skills to operate effectively in it.

True, effective systemic change is only achieved through close cooperation between independent elements of a lively civil society, which can raise key issues, propose ideas and actively monitor and report on progress. This is a long-term vision of support to civil society.

The world community is increasingly recognising that military conflicts and the associated consequences of involuntary resettlement have various negative consequences for women and children, and that the application of international human rights and humanitarian law with a gender perspective is important. Also important are the sustainability of services, the provision of best practice, evidence-based approaches, and support for and access to civil society peace building.

In conclusion, it is important to note that behind each peaceful action there is at least one theory of change. The theory of change allows us to be aware of how we



intend to order future activity and build goals logically so as to achieve the best results. Any theory designed to achieve social change must involve a change in attitude and behaviour. Only then will it be considered effective.

One of the project participants, after completing the project, thanked us and our donors with these words: “From the first day I attended this project my life was changed completely because of your care. I started thinking that life is beautiful and I want to live and be happy.”

The Center for Women in the Modern World (CWMW) is an independent women’s NGO, founded on 2 July 1999 with the aim of promoting women’s human rights in Azerbaijan and at the international level. Since 2008, CWMW has had consultative status with the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the UN.

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on problem-solving and behavioural activation. Azerbaijan has one of the highest IDP rates per capita in the world. One million refugees and IDPs is a huge burden for Azerbaijan’s economy. A durable solution to the problems of IDPs in Azerbaijan can only be achieved through the withdrawal of Armenian forces from the occupied territories and return of the IDPs to their homes.

As a result of the military aggression of the Armenian armed forces since 1988, 20% of Azerbaijani territory, Nagorno-Karabakh and 7 surrounding regions, was occupied, more than 600,000 people were forcibly expelled from their

Child mental health: everyone's responsibility

Grantee: Azerbaijan Social Work Public Union, Baku

Project: Increasing mental health awareness using an 'ecological' perspective

Our project was a response to suicide cases among adolescents in Azerbaijan. The project involved seminars for school pupils, teachers and parents. About 100 adolescents, 100 parents/caregivers, 3 principals and 30 teachers from 3 schools, plus 15 employees of family support centres participated in the seminars. Newspaper articles, Facebook, the organisation's website and quarterly newsletters, radio talk shows, plus live and recorded seminars were used to reach out to the general population.

When selecting the schools, we sought to identify those regions which faced most challenges and had most pupils from vulnerable families. These schools were located in Baku, Sumgayit and Qobustan. At these schools, more than half the pupils came from 'incomplete' families, i.e. those with only a mother or a father.

According to teachers and school psychologists, mental health issues among children are generally associated with mild depression, sadness, anxiety, passiveness, impulsiveness, low self-esteem, and low self-confidence.

However, awareness of mental health problems and the importance of mental health services at the community level is very low. The lack of such awareness and services prevents people from seeking professional help. Mostly people think that talking to friends, family or community members will be enough help. In this kind of environment, our seminars were valuable in raising

awareness. All participants were provided with information and useful tips on how to avoid mental health problems among children, and how to refer children to professional services when they see that there are issues that need to be addressed.

All the parents and teachers who participated in the seminars were actively involved and eager to receive all the information. They said that the information they received during the seminars was not only useful to the children but to them as adults as well, since they had not received that kind of information often, if ever. They considered that protecting mental health is not only important for children but also for adults. But they first needed to protect the mental health of their children. Parents and teachers mentioned that they often found themselves in situations where they needed to handle a child's mental health crisis but did not know how to do this. After the seminars they knew that they should take seriously their every suspicion about the mental health of their children and consult with professionals or take their children to professional psychologists. The children



also said that now they would talk to their parents, teachers and the school psychologist when they feel sad or had other issues.

This project was a wonderful tool for reducing uncertainties about mental health issues and people's anxiety about approaching professional when facing mental health problems. The uniqueness of the project lay in using an 'ecological' perspective which focused not only on the child but also on the school, family and community.

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Photo: Khanbala Ahmadli, PR Coordinator

The BEARR Trust Annual Lecture 2018

'Putin's Russia and the Ghosts of the Past'

Lecture by Shaun Walker
EBRD, 6pm 20 September 2018

Shaun Walker is Central and Eastern Europe Correspondent for the *Guardian*, based in Budapest and covering the wider region. Previously, he spent more than a decade in Moscow, first for the *Independent* and then for the *Guardian*. His book

on Putin's Russia, *The Long Hangover: Putin's New Russia and the Ghosts of the Past*, was published in January 2018 by Oxford University Press.

The lecture will be followed by a reception. For details and to book, see <http://www.bearr.org/bearr-trust-annual-lecture-20-september-2018-at-6-pm/>

Home care and jobs for teenagers

Grantee: International Society for Human Rights, Yerevan

Project: Caring for adolescents with mental health issues at home

The number of people with mental disorders in Armenia, according to the Ministry of Health, is around 45,000, of whom 6000 are receiving treatment. The most at risk are those who are in the socially vulnerable group who do not get state-guaranteed treatment but have recurrent mental illnesses.

The term refers mainly to people with epilepsy and schizophrenia, who are at a glance in a balanced state, but are prone to epilepsy crises. This group includes the beneficiaries of the project 'Caring for adolescents with mental health issues at home', 20 of them from the Vardashen and Nubarashen communities in Yerevan,



MEETING WITH A PSYCHOLOGIST

where 17 teenagers live with different mental health problems, including 8 boys and 9 girls, many of whom don't attend school, and some of them are already teenagers and have no occupation.

These families were provided with support thanks to The BEARR Trust's grant and the efforts of our business partners. Our mobile groups, consisting of a psychologist, social worker and NGO volunteers, made two visits a week to these families.

The psychologist had personal conversations with children and parents, introducing them to methods of coping with the illness as well as organisation of the teenager's care at home. Over the course of nearly 20 visits, the children managed to get closer to the group members and trust the psychologist, despite the fact that many families avoided visits at the beginning of the programme.

The families were provided with first-aid items suitable for teenagers. One of the best ways to help mentally disadvantaged young people is to integrate them into society, as most of our adolescents are not attending school or any other institution because of their illness. So we organised computer training courses for 17 adolescents, with more than 20 training sessions, during which many young people demonstrated great ability,

which led the organisation to look for ways of continuing their education and for employment opportunities for them.

The parents of teenagers with mental health problems also needed psychological and methodological support, as they are responsible for the care of the children and their future destiny, as they often remain isolated from society in order to conceal their children's problems, and the provision of social services is still insignificant. For this reason, 12 informative training sessions for parents were organised by doctors and special educators.

Brochures were prepared that included first-aid information that was distributed to parents and polyclinics. Our organisation has been providing legal and social support to these families since 2011, and continues to support them, especially through the social inclusion and employment of 17 young people.

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Nicola's Sponsored Marathon

Nicola Ramsden, BEARR's new Chairman, is celebrating her election with a sponsored event in aid of BEARR. She explains:

"I'm running the Oxford Half-Marathon on 7 October to raise funds for BEARR's new website. We already have lots of good information on our current website but we want to add more, and make it easier for people to find. Like most of BEARR's work, preparation for a new website has been done by volunteers. We want our new website to be as professional and powerful as possible, and even BEARR, with its impressively low overheads, has to pay for some services. That's why, a few years after I endured a sprint triathlon to

raise funds for BEARR's small grants scheme, I am putting on my running shoes again. Many people can walk faster than I can run, but I hope that my recent high-altitude training in the French Alps might give me a small advantage around the flatlands of Oxford.

If you'd like to help BEARR by sponsoring me, you can do so through my fundraising page at <https://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/NicolaRamsden3>. Thank you!"



New Trustee: Jane Ebel

BEARR's Trustees are delighted to have recruited Jane Ebel as a new Trustee. Her knowledge and experience of the NGO world will add a welcome extra dimension to our deliberations.

Jane began her career in Eastern Europe in 1986, selling computers into large factories and teaching printed circuit board design to engineers (something for which she felt inadequately equipped!) With the advent of microcomputers, however, the market opened up and she was able to sell to educational and medical institutions, which felt a more appropriate fit. From there it was a natural sidestep into the voluntary sector and Jane spent the next 20 years running health and social care projects in Russia and neighbouring republics, often collaborating with HealthProm.

Since 2009 Jane has worked almost exclusively in Moldova. Current projects include an EU-funded Early Years Inclusive Education project, Communication through Music (a bespoke tool developed specially for Moldova, which enables teachers, parents and carers of vulnerable children to use music

therapeutically) and the organisation of the first ever inclusive Race for People with Disability, alongside the Annual Chisinau Marathon. Jane is passionate about collaborating with small to medium NGOs, working in a joined-up way to ensure value for money and the best outcome for the beneficiaries.

In the Summer, by way of a change, Jane runs International Music Courses in the South of France where she is happily chained to the kitchen sink!

Jane has two daughters, who have taken up the family baton: Francesca is a journalist with Associated Press in Moscow; and Pippa is currently studying Mandarin and works in Shanghai.



Information Officer

BEARR is delighted that Anna Lukanina-Morgan has now returned as part-time Information Office after the birth of her daughter, and Tatiana Mordvinova, who filled in during Anna's absence, is also staying on. Anna and Tanya will share the tasks, Anna working mainly from home, Tanya in the office.

BEARR is getting a new look!

BEARR is excited to announce that over the coming weeks we will be introducing our new branding across all areas of our work. The logo below shows how you can expect to see BEARR look in future. Please bear with us as we roll out our new look both on and off line.



With many thanks to Sasha from Blue & Yellow Design for his work to make us look our best as we continue to develop our work supporting vulnerable people in Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the Caucasus.

About the BEARR Trust

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

The BEARR Trust is a British registered charity. It was formed in 1991 to act as a bridge between the welfare and health sectors of Britain and the former Soviet republics. Its mission now is to help children and other vulnerable and disadvantaged groups in Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the Caucasus. We believe the best way to do this is to help small NGOs working in health and social welfare to build knowledge, know-how, skills and contacts including with those doing similar work in the UK.

We pursue our aims by:

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

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

Trustees: Nicola Ramsden (Chairman), Megan Bick, Jane Ebel, Ross Gill, Janet Gunn, Ali Lantukh, Marcia Levy, Ann Lewis, Biljana Radonjic Ker-Lindsay, Michael Rasell, Charlie Walker
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Newsletter: Editor: Ann Lewis; layout: Leila Carlyle