

The BEARR Trust Annual Conference 2008 Changing Attitudes to Disability in Russia, Ukraine and Central Asia

Held for the first time in BEARR's new premises in CAN-Mezzanine in Southwark, the Annual Conference revisited themes that have been touched on several times since the conferences began in the early 1990s. What has changed since then? Has progress been made? Appropriately, two of our speakers were wheelchair users who had flown in from Russia and Kazakhstan respectively, and they were able to give the delegates first-hand accounts of their experiences and of the campaigns they are managing.

But rather than begin in the 1990s, we went back initially to the early 20th century, as **Dr Elena Iarskaia-Smirnova** of Saratov State Technical University sketched out **The Historical and Sociological Background** to attitudes to disability, and **Michael Rasell** of Birmingham University examined the evolution of **Disability Law and Policy**.

Iarskaia-Smirnova traced the dominant themes in the Soviet approach to disability, the most persistent of which was 'who does not work does not eat'. This maxim resurfaced explicitly at several points throughout the 20th century, and was implicit in insurance-based healthcare for workers only, and the notion of 'rational management' of disability in relation to a person's capacity to work. Typical of this approach was the creation,

The BEARR Trust is grateful for the support of CEELBAS in preparing the conference, and for the sponsorship of Q'straint, manufacturers of safety belts for wheelchair users.

*Report by Nicola Ramsden,
BEARR Trustee*



as part of the New Economic Policy in the 1920s, of large associations such as the 'Electric Engine Enterprise of the Blind' to provide work opportunities for the disabled.

Paradoxically, the development of 'rational management' of disability ultimately led to the marginalisation and exclusion from work of some disabled people. The activity of 'experts' in expanding and refining definitions of

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disability led to the creation, in 1929 (two years into the first Five Year Plan), of the Scientific Institute of Defectology. Some forms of disability were classified as capable of work; others were excluded. As the command economy developed, the state sought tighter control over cooperatives of disabled workers. The establishment of nursing homes, advertised as a benefit of socialism, often led to the removal of disabled people to isolated converted monasteries.

The 1950s saw the emergence of the idea that disabled people could receive a pension and not work at all. State control and isolating forms of care provision increased, so that by the 1960s there was little chance that a disabled person could have economic independence. By the 1980s the normative image of a disabled person was of a pensioner, not an enthusiastic worker.

But there was and still is ambiguity both in official discourse and in public attitudes. 'Who does not work does not eat' was still appearing on posters in the 1960s and again in the 1980s. A famous 1960s comedy film mocked the system and portrayed the pensioned disabled as spongers and parasites. A survey carried out only this year revealed a common attitude that the disabled 'are a burden to society'.

There were other themes too. Military invalidity was prominent after each World War. In theory, disabled soldiers received the biggest pensions and privileges. In reality, these were not always delivered. An ideological strand emerged after the 1917 Revolution, which excluded from help all 'socially alien elements' such as White Army supporters, kulaks, manufacturers and landowners. A further influence on attitudes to disability was (and is) deep-rooted folklore that regarded disability as a mark of personal guilt, and a just reason for exclusion.

Iarskaia-Smirnova gave credit to the Soviet Union's characteristic 'big experiments, big challenges, and big mistakes'. The pioneer who first proposed that blind and deaf people were not incapable of learning was imprisoned, but eventually a school was established and the first students graduated in 1971. Meanwhile the Soviet population mastered the skills of using official or unofficial channels to criticise the social environment. While the State continued to present itself as a rich and responsible provider throughout the 'Zastoi' (stagnation) years of the 1980s, a sense of rebellion and liberation was revealing itself in underground literature, until the idea of 'rights' reached the light in the years of post-Soviet freedom. At this point, we begin to see the parents of disabled children start to challenge openly the dubious classifications and practices of the 'experts'.

Michael Rasell built on this background by explaining how much the framework for disability policy in Russia and the CIS is still conditioned by the Soviet past. The international definition of disability, enshrined in the 2006

Disability Law and Policy in Russia and the CIS



"The sky's the limit for people with disabilities" – but the reality is very different...

UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, is based on a 'social model' that puts discriminatory conditions in society at the heart of definitions of disability. The social model aims for society to adjust to promote the inclusion and participation of the disabled, as well as giving medical support. The Soviet and post-Soviet framework is, in contrast, a 'medical model' in which the most significant feature is the provision of medical help to restore a disabled person's ability to adapt to society, and in particular to work. This medical model is paternalistic, institutionalised, limiting of disabled people (a consequence of the 'science' of Defectology) and gives priority to soldiers and workers over children. Its outward manifestations are inaccessible housing, transport and public buildings and, in social attitudes, the perpetuation of stigma and misunderstanding.

Rasell posed the question: can a rights-based approach to disability work in Russia? His examination of post-Soviet legislation – the 1993 Constitution; the 1995 Law on Disability – showed the emergence of the language of rights, such as the right to education and the right to work. However, these laws were declarative, with no provision made for implementation. Firms pay fines rather than comply with employment law. Only 15% of disabled adults work in Russia, compared with 40-50% in the US.

The power of expert medico-social commissions persists, working without representation of the disabled and with little family consultation, and so tending to perpetuate traditional definitions of and approaches to disability. The study of Defectology by trainee teachers has morphed into the new 'Correctional Teaching', which is a separate strand of teacher training and creates a barrier against inclusive education.

Tony Longrigg, BEARR's new Chairman, was struck by the perverse influence exercised by the Ministry of Finance, responsible for the controversial 'monetisation' policy of

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2005 (which effectively withdrew much practical help from disabled people) and the cancellation of tax breaks for the disabled employed. The Ministry of Finance also has a powerful indirect influence through its control of resources to NGOs (disbursed through State-sponsored competitions), which are tending to make NGOs more bureaucratic and to function as extensions of ministries.

Although current policies have not yet broken away from the Soviet idea of the disabled as passive recipients of State aid, there are some positive trends such as the development of new NGOs and the opening of rehabilitation centres. **Chris Goodey** of the Centre for Studies in Inclusive Education noted some very positive attitudes in Moscow towards children with learning difficulties. **Iarskaia-Smirnova** said that parents of disabled children were the strongest campaigners for progressive policies, and were effective in pressurising local authorities. The Centre for Curative Pedagogics in Moscow is campaigning for disabled rights and is challenging the power of expert commissions. However, Moscow is ahead of other administrations in Russia, and overall, grass-roots efforts have not yet translated into top-down policy change.

Interestingly, the most progressive former Soviet country in terms of legislation is Turkmenistan, which has just ratified a law on disability that comes closest to the 2006 UN Convention. But in general, as **Rasell** concluded, even where internationally accepted principles such as independence and inclusion are reflected in the wording of legislation, the devil in the detail limits effective implementation.

The next three sessions of the conference enabled comparisons to be made between Russia, Ukraine and Kazakhstan.

Within Russia, the experiences of **Denise Roza** and **Natalya Prisetskaya**, respectively Director and Programme Manager of Perspektiva in Moscow, and **Tanya Buynovskaya**, Programme and Partnerships Manager at HealthProm, contrasted activity in Moscow and the situation in more distant provinces such as Altai.

In Moscow, the city government is giving such large sums to companies to promote the employment of disabled people that **Roza** wondered whether it was counter-productive. She felt that employment law needed further reform to get companies to act in the real best interests of the disabled. She pointed out that many disabled people are ill-prepared for work – because they lack education or went through the inadequate Home School Programme – and as a result are at risk of being exploited by companies who employ them.

Perspektiva is part of a network of NGOs that promote the key principles of the social model of disability: human rights and independent living. The case for inclusive schooling is made by a coalition called 'Independent Living Network Inclusive Education for All'. A programme called 'Path to a Career' aims to increase mainstream

employment for the disabled – but so far, its activities are mainly confined to Moscow. **Francis Callaway**, BEARR Trustee, suggested that foreign companies might have a better approach to employing the disabled, and indeed companies that Perspektiva look to for leadership include KPMG, Nike, Johnson and Johnson, Renaissance Capital and Citibank. (For more on Perspektiva's activities, see page 5.)

Far away in the Altai region, HealthProm tackled the problems faced by families with disabled children in remote rural areas, and were ultimately successful in setting up two day care centres for 'ineducable', multiply-disabled children. **Buynovskaya** emphasised how much effort had to go into changing attitudes, in particular training conservative doctors to talk to parents and the children, and to work with other professionals. The other problem was dealing with the local government after appointees took the place of elected officials ('the new person comes with new rules'), but one of the project's successes was the development of HealthProm's partner, 'Vozrazhdenie' (Revival) to the stage where they could work both alone and in collaboration with the government.

On Ukraine, **Mykola Swarnyk**, Associate Professor at Lviv National Polytechnic University, talked about the two organisations he had founded: Nadiya Association for Children with Cerebral Palsy, and Dzherelo Children's Rehabilitation Centre. Swarnyk has created a strong national organisation uniting over 70 local groups of parents and medical professionals in order to provide services and to lobby for the rights of people with intellectual disabilities. In the 21 years since the birth of his own son (who is a wheelchair user with mental retardation), much has improved. There are now some community-based services providing early intervention and physical rehabilitation. Swarnyk takes some of the credit for introducing three new professions into Ukraine: physical therapists, social workers and special needs teachers. However, the profession of occupational therapist is not yet established. Also, Swarnyk is still campaigning (and would like to collaborate with Western professionals) to introduce further education for more severely handicapped people. New building codes are starting to improve access (although patchily) and Swarnyk is delighted by recent publicity coups that are helping to change attitudes to the disabled. He is encouraged by the growing confidence of parents in organising events, lobbying and getting elected to local councils, as he himself has done.

Kateryna Kolchenko, Prorector of the Open International University of Human Development in Kyiv, described her shock when she visited England in 1995 on a British Council programme, and saw disabled children in mainstream nurseries and schools. Ukraine had lagged behind Russia in giving disabled students access to higher education (not achieved in Ukraine until 1999). Yet only nine years after Kolchenko's epiphany, she had set up,

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without public funds, the first fully accessible university campus in Ukraine. (More on this on page 8.)

In Kazakhstan, **Lyazzat Kaltayeva** chairs SHYRAK Disabled Women's Association in Almaty – disabled women suffer threefold discrimination on account of their gender, their disability, and often their poverty. NGOs like SHYRAK started to emerge when the position of disabled people deteriorated during the crisis years of 1992-6, and now that the economy has stabilised, they are becoming involved in government decision-making. There is now greater awareness of the social model of disability, and SHYRAK is encouraging greater inclusion and participation for women in both education and employment.

Both Kaltayeva and **Jonathan Watkins**, Project Manager at HealthProm, noted cultural differences between the different Central Asian countries, despite their common Soviet heritage. The more stable and prosperous countries have a more liberal approach to disability, in contrast to those that have suffered recent violent conflict through civil war (Tajikistan) or revolution (Kyrgyzstan). Watkins, who had been working with an NGO and the Dushanbe city authorities to provide more home support and reduce intake into baby houses (see article on page 6), discovered greater extremes of social exclusion in Tajikistan than he had encountered working even in the rural Altai in Russia.

The common theme of overcoming the destructive work of medical commissions in locking people into defined categories of disability emerged also in Central Asia. There has been some progress: 'ineducable' rulings are no longer made, and Watkins hoped that the commissions could become a means of facilitating access to education. Kaltayeva was concerned that, while understanding of the social model of disability with its underpinnings of rights and inclusion was increasing, it could be threatened by the spread of Islam, which emphasises charity rather than rights.

Charles Buxton, the Central Asian representative for INTRAC (International NGO Training and Research Centre) looked at the prospects for disability NGOs in Central Asia to attract funds from international donors. Donors are now trying to limit their risks by giving funding to governments rather than NGO-based programmes, although NGOs that deal with disability have an advantage in often having a strong membership base and therefore being perceived as close to their communities.



Central Asia panel: Lyazzat Kaltayeva, Jonathan Watkins, Marcia Levy and Charles Buxton

Like Kaltayeva and Watkins, Buxton observed different country contexts throughout Central Asia, but he drew some general conclusions: an encouraging willingness to look at outside experience and adopt new laws, but marred by poor implementation and professional incompetence and the persistent lack of disabled representation. More money is coming from business, but poverty still means that many families cannot afford to look after the disabled at home – institutions such as baby houses will have to continue for some time, and a fostering system is a more distant prospect.

In the final session, the conference focused again on NGOs and how they can influence attitudes to disability. **Charles Walker** of Oxford University said that NGOs in the region had made good progress in moving thinking about disability away from a medical model and towards a social model. There had been some setbacks, such as the monetisation policy in Russia, and there was still doubt about how to change the attitudes of doctors on medical commissions. NGOs needed to be more visible.

Denise Roza recommended working only with receptive groups and not wasting time on those whose attitudes would never change. She thought that more should be done to bring in best practice from NGOs elsewhere in order to achieve 'the missing vision'. **Michael Rasell** believed that training social workers was important. Because decisions are not made in a multi-agency framework, it was important to instil the right attitude in at least one person in each area.

Some confusion emerged about whether NGOs should campaign for the right to remove certificates of invalidity from people who were capable of work, with **Tony Wolstenholme** of Child Health International and **Natalia Prisetskaya** pointing out that some people sought more serious classifications of invalidity in order to get a higher pension. A discussion on the use of language was similarly inconclusive: Kaltayeva had earlier drawn attention to the difficulty of finding appropriate terminology for invalidity that was not clumsy, and Roza believed that NGOs had a role in finding better, non-offensive terms, or in trying to remove the stigma from otherwise acceptable words. Kolchenko, in contrast, thought that language took second place to practical action to improve lives.

Jo Lucas of Kastanja Consulting raised the issue of corruption among the directors of baby houses and internats – NGOs should question what the directors did with the government funds they received.

Thanking the speakers at the close of the conference, **Tony Longrigg** commented on the superb quality of the presentations and contributions, all the more impressive given that several speakers were not using their first language. He informed delegates that The BEARR Trust would have a segment on disability in its Small Grants Scheme 2009 (see page 9).

A fuller version of this report, some of the PowerPoint presentations and a larger selection of photographs can be accessed at <http://www.bearr.org/node/1542>

Perspektiva: changing attitudes in Russia

by Denise Roza
Director, Perspektiva

Fourteen million disabled Russians still face daily discrimination and attitudinal and physical barriers to education, employment and more. Many myths and misconceptions still prevail, in part because disabled people are isolated and excluded from community activities. The general public in Russia still rarely encounters disabled people and thus lacks even a basic understanding of disability issues.

Perspektiva, a Russian disability NGO, aims to promote independence and an improved quality of life for disabled people in the Russian community. One of Perspektiva's key areas of work is changing misconceptions and negative attitudes and breaking down physical and psychological barriers through public awareness education. As part of this, Perspektiva has worked with

the media at the local and national level, produced and broadcast public service announcements, and published a variety of information and advocacy materials, including posters and brochures about inclusive education, accessibility, and how to include a person with a disability in the workplace. With the support of the UK Employers' Forum, Perspektiva recently organised a Business Advisory Board on Disability that aims to inform members of the business community about employment and service provision for people with disabilities. Perspektiva also holds disability awareness sessions for HR personnel, teachers at inclusive schools, and journalists and other professionals, to educate them about the social model of disability and a wide range of disability issues. As part of its campaign to promote inclusive education, teams of young disabled

trainers/activists hold disability awareness sessions for school children.

A biennial international disability film festival opens in Moscow and tours more than 20 regions. In November 2008 the festival showcased 70 films from 20 countries. The award for Best Full Length Feature was given to the British film, *Special People*, which was recently released at cinemas in the UK. Perspektiva maintains a website, and a disability listserv which provides a medium for sharing information about disability issues.

Finally, the majority of Perspektiva's team of 50 – the professional trainers, coordinators, managers and lawyers who lead all Perspektiva's activities – themselves have various types of disability.

Of course, one sensational case can have a dramatic effect ...

The airline was proved wrong



Natalia at the BEARR conference in November.

Natalia Prisetskaya of Perspektiva has been vindicated in her campaign for recompense from Siberia Airlines (S7), which had refused unlawfully to let her board a flight. As Natalia said after her 3½-month legal struggle against S7, the No. 2 airline in Russia and a giant in the industry, 'We managed to draw attention to one of the grave disability rights issues in Russia. It is a precedent which will help people with disabilities to defend their right before transportation agencies.'

The saga began on 30 June 2008, when Natalia, who uses a wheelchair, was setting off on a business trip from Moscow to Vladikavkaz. She had never had any difficulties in

getting onto flights in Russia, which she has criss-crossed in her work for Perspektiva. That day, too, everything was going smoothly. She registered for the flight at Domodedovo airport, checked in, went through security, and was transported to the tarmac, where airport employees were preparing to help lift her and her wheelchair onto the waiting plane. Then a flight attendant refused to let Natalia on board, citing 'internal' company regulations. The flight attendant refused even to talk to Natalia, who had to go to a different airport and use a different airline to make it to her training course on time.

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CARING FOR AT-RISK BABIES

Tajikistan: Better care for at-risk babies

by Jonathan Watkins

HealthProm works with local communities in Eastern Europe and Central Asia to improve health and social care for vulnerable women, the newborn and children. In 2006 we identified an unmet need in Tajikistan: we observed that many babies and young children were being placed in baby homes as a 'first resort' in response to family problems, male migration for work in Russia, or the pressures of having a child with additional needs. There were no sources of help or advice to help families stay together and ensure children are cared for in their family home. We observed numerous children in two baby homes in Dushanbe who were suffering from a lack of care and stimulation and, in particular, from a lack of attachment to a consistent and loving adult.

In HealthProm we are motivated by the knowledge that babies and young children need to be brought up with the consistent love and guidance of an adult. We found partners who shared our view in the Dushanbe City Health Department, a local NGO for parents with children with additional needs, and an international NGO, ORA. We resolved to work together to create conditions where more parents can retain care of their babies and young children, fewer babies and young children enter baby homes, and those who are in a baby home get better support to achieve their full emotional, intellectual and physical development.

Tajikistan, which lies to the north of Afghanistan and has borders with China, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan, is the poorest of the Central Asian post-Soviet states. Much of the country is mountainous and inaccessible. Dushanbe, the capital, has a population of just under a million out of a total population of seven million. Soon after independence in 1997, a

civil war blighted Tajikistan, resulting in the retaining of a constitution and administration that bear a close resemblance to earlier Soviet times. Similarly, attitudes towards family life and childcare have changed little. There are no state-run social services to support people in the community. Like all post-Soviet states, Tajikistan operates a system of registration for children with additional physical and learning needs.

Using resources from a family trust in the UK, and from within ORA International, we have trained a group

building and now provides support services for 50 children and their families, some from the community and others from the baby home. Those from the community visit with their parents (usually mothers) and spend structured time on developmental activities while the parents get support to care for their children at home. The children from the baby home gain developmental experiences that they would not get within the baby home. Most significantly, these children have individual care from a loving adult and gain essential life skills,



Photo: Jonathan Watkins

Ball bath at Kishte

of 20 social workers, paediatricians and welfare professionals working in NGOs to support parents and opened a day resource centre for vulnerable children and families. The resource centre (called 'Kishte' which means 'Ark') is located in the grounds of Baby Home 1. Kishte opened in February 2008 after extensive renovation of a derelict

delayed because of the unstimulating institutional environment. Often these are basic skills such as taking solid food, walking and going to the toilet. Within Kishte, professionals from a wide range of disciplines – social workers, paediatricians, occupational therapist and teachers – come together to work and interact with children and families. All have gone through

CARING FOR AT-RISK BABIES

our training programme and have developed a multiprofessional work identity that builds services around the needs of the child.

Our work received an unwelcome setback when ORA, our international NGO partner, was expelled from the country as a result of a hostile official attitude to international NGOs. Kishte closed for much of the summer of 2008 until we were able to find a new local NGO partner. Kishte is now up and running again.

HealthProm will continue to work in partnership with the City Health Department and our local NGO partner to improve care and support for families and children in Tajikistan. We are making progress towards achieving long-term funding for Kishte and hope soon to be able to renovate a second building in the grounds of the baby home to be used as a crisis centre for women and babies at risk of being separated at birth.



Party at Kishte

Photo: Jonathan Watkins

We continue to work to promote best professional practice to help families to care for their children in difficult circumstances.

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The airline was proved wrong ... continued from page 5

Perspektiva turned to Russia's consumer and transport regulatory agencies, demanding that S7 be held accountable for violating Russian law. Separately, Natalia filed a civil lawsuit demanding 1 million rubles in compensation for moral damage. Lawyers from Perspektiva and the International Confederation of Consumer Rights Associations provided legal support for the landmark case.

After a wave of media coverage and its own investigation, the Russian Federal Air Transport Agency directed both S7 and Domodedovo Airport 'to correct the documents governing the provision of service to passengers with disabilities, to make those documents compliant with the Air Transportation Regulations, and to clarify both the liabilities and the duties of airlines and airport services when providing service to such passengers.' But the government response did not end there. Sergei Mironov, the speaker

of the upper chamber of parliament, asked the Prosecutor General to check the Federal Aviation Rules (FAR) for compliance with federal law. The Prosecutor General's investigation confirmed that the internal regulations used by the aircraft crew contradicted the Air Codex, Consumer Protection Law, and the law 'On Social Protection of People with Disabilities in the Russian Federation,' as well as the FAR. S7 was ordered to correct the discrepancies and punish those responsible.

On 17 October 2008, the Cheryomushky District Court in Moscow ordered S7 to pay 50,000 rubles to Natalia and imposed a 25,000 rouble fine 'The amount of money is not so important,' Natalia said. 'The main thing is that the court confirmed that the airline was not right.'

Natalia Prisetskaya's case has established an important precedent, demonstrating that no business in

Russia, no matter how large, can deny the rights and dignity of the disabled with impunity. Unfortunately, however, it has not put an end to discrimination by S7 as Perspektiva gets frequent phone calls from angry travellers who have been refused access to flights. It has, however, raised awareness in the community about the discrimination that still exists in Russia towards people with disabilities.

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DISABILITY AND EDUCATION

Improving the lot of disabled students in Ukraine

by *Kateryna Kolchenko*

The years since 1999, when the Open International University of Human Development 'Ukraine' (University 'Ukraine') was founded, have seen advances in integrated learning in the country's higher educational institutions.

The University 'Ukraine' is a non-governmental, not-for-profit higher educational institution (HEI), the first in Ukraine of the integrated type. The mission of our university is to provide equal access to quality higher education for people wishing to reach their full potential, including those with disability. Each year the number of disabled students at the university has grown: from 384 students in 1999/2000 to 1870 out of a total student population of 47,000 in 2008/2009. Since 2001 the development and implementation of an accommodation system for students with disability has become the primary task of the University 'Ukraine'.

At the same time, the number of students with disability in other Ukrainian HEIs has risen as well, reaching 3500 students in 2006. Unfortunately, integrated learning has been introduced in only a few HEIs. This is because of the inadequacy of Ukrainian law, which does not insist on integrated HEIs, proper working conditions for staff, or the creation of integrated academic groups.

Our university took the initiative in establishing several annual events for disabled students, in art, science and games. These including: an international scientific conference on 'Current problems of education in an integrated educational environment' (2000); an art festival for students with disability "Ray of Hope" (2003); the Ukrainian Games for Students with Disability (2004); and a science competition for students with disability (2005). 2003 saw the creation of 'Gaudeamus', the Ukrainian NGO for students with disability. This brings together over 800 students with special educational needs.

The university is developing this unique project at its own expense, creating the first completely accessible university campus in Ukraine.

In 2007 we embarked on an inclusive system of higher education, which means accessible education which meets the individual needs of all students, especially those with disability. Inclusive education in our university is based on the following principles:

- Bringing education to where a student with disability lives
- Provision of access to education
- A flexible approach to the learning process, organisation and teaching

- Pre-university adaptation of students to an integrated educational environment
- Progress monitoring and psychological and pedagogical assistance during the academic year
- Provision of conditions for the comprehensive development of the personality.

Inclusion is a new educational philosophy, and putting its principles into practice in the Ukrainian system of higher education is not an easy task, as it demands of those involved a major transformation in both attitudes and the learning process. And our efforts are not always reflected in the wider community. Our accessible campus is surrounded by an inaccessible environment. We have been urging the local council since 2006 to make the Metro entrance accessible, so far without success. And few facilities more widely are accessible except in newly built premises.

But eventually our important work will result not only in new opportunities for teaching and the socialisation of students with special needs, but in a general improvement in the attitudes of society.



Photo taken by a student at the university

Disabled Student Games

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The BEARR Trust Small Grants Scheme 2009

The BEARR Small Grants Scheme 2009 will have three segments:

- A. Helping the homeless reintegrate into society (Russia only)
- B. Relieving the distress of human trafficking (Russia and other countries formerly part of the Soviet Union, excluding the Baltic States)
- C. Changing attitudes to disability (Russia and other countries formerly part of the Soviet Union, excluding the Baltic States).

Aims and criteria

Projects should aim to:

- Encourage sharing of experience and learning among NGOs with relevant aims
- Disseminate good practice more widely
- Facilitate cooperation with and/or coordination among NGOs and other organisations working with relevant groups
- Improve awareness, influence policy, or engage public institutions in addressing the relevant issues

- Propose other, imaginative, ways of achieving the Scheme's aims.

The deadline for applications is 15 March. For details of the funding available and how to apply, go to <http://www.bearr.org/en/node/189>

Part A of The BEARR Trust Small Grants Scheme 2009 is funded by a grant from the Moscow Office of the law firm Baker Botts, and Part C by Q'straint, manufacturers of safety belts for wheelchair users.

BEARR Trust Small Grants Scheme 2007 'Nochlezhka', St Petersburg

The aim of Nochlezhka's project was to strengthen cooperation among Russian NGOs and state-sponsored organisations (including local councils) working with homeless people, and to organise joint campaigns and actions. This was part of a long-term strategy aimed at developing a strong partnership with other Russian and international organisations to combine their skills and resources to establish national and regional laws and programmes of social and medical support for the homeless in Russia.

BEARR's grant, funded by Baker Botts, was used to help fund various events:

In November 2007, a **seminar on socio-psychological help for homeless drug addicts** was organised for local government officials, and staff of night shelters and various rehabilitation programmes, aimed at replicating Nochlezhka's successful rehabilitation



Nochlezhka's night bus provides free food and drink to the homeless, as well as emergency medical help and advice on housing and social issues.

programme. Nochlezhka's social consultants presented the results of their five-year project, 'Halfway Home.'

After the seminar, experts from Nochlezhka continued to work with eight state night shelters, organising 12 follow-up training courses in eight

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city night shelters. So far, three shelters have agreed to provide room for rehabilitation programmes for homeless addicts, and work has begun on these under Nochlezhka supervision.

Nochlezhka believes it is very important to work with officials, because the problem of homelessness in Russia can be solved only with the active participation of regional and national governments.

In December 2007, Nochlezhka and its regional partners organised **a round table meeting to exchange working experience from different regions**. The event brought together NGO activists and specialists from the labour and social care committees from Archangelsk, Murmansk, Vladimir, Togliatti and St Petersburg. As a result of this meeting and follow-up activities, several regions have started to develop regional programmes for the homeless. In May 2009 four officials from St Petersburg Committee for Labour and Social Care will visit Nochlezhka's partner organisation in Helsinki to see the Finnish system of support for the homeless with a view to improving the system in St Petersburg region.

In July 2008 the Director of Nochlezhka, Maxim Yegorov, visited France and met Nikolov Plamen, deputy to the Head of the Division of NGOs and Civic Society of the Directorate General of Democracy and Political Affairs at the Council of Europe. As a result of this meeting

Nochlezhka received additional funds to organise an **International Conference on Homelessness and Poverty**, held in St Petersburg in November 2008. It brought together members of two Russian networks of NGOs 'Russian movement against poverty' and 'Interregional network against social exclusion', as well as members of the Global Coalitional for Action against Poverty (GCAP) from 16 countries including the UK (Anders Dahlbeck, BOND). The objectives of the conference were to discuss and agree a shared plan for 2009, including plans for coordinated pan-European activities; to strengthen the capacity of national coalitions to deliver the 2009 GCAP European Strategic Framework plans and improve GCAP's ways of working at national, regional (European) and global levels; and to agree a shared 2009 plan for coordinated actions by the Russian networks.

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BEARR Trust Small Grants Scheme 2008 'Preventing Human Trafficking in Southern Moldova'

The unfortunate phenomenon of human trafficking has accelerated in Moldova to reach unforeseen levels. A major means of combating and preventing this horrible trend is through information. This was the motivation for the NGO Perspectiva's project, '**Preventing Human Trafficking through Information in the South of Moldova**', thanks to generous financial support from The BEARR Trust. In this project, Perspectiva and our dedicated team of volunteers organised a 'Disoteca of Information' in July 2008 at the Patria Centre in Cahul. Our volunteers distributed information materials and helped to warn their young peers not

to be naïve in regard to the dangers of human trafficking. They also encouraged hundreds of young people to use the free hotline 0800777777 run by La Strada.

Additionally, on 20 July 2008, Perspectiva organized three campaigns entitled 'Be Informed - don't be Trafficked!' During these campaigns, 75 young people distributed information around their communities. We decided to host these campaigns in Moldova's poorest villages as they have the least access to information. The citizens were extremely appreciative and interested, as this was a new concept for many of them. They also enjoyed seeing a

team of volunteers take action in their communities. During these events, many people enquired about the free hotline. Since such a large majority of young Moldovan citizens go abroad for work, it is imperative that every Moldovan knows how to confirm the validity of a potential job offer abroad. Our campaigns played an extremely significant role in informing a vulnerable population about a problem occurring in their very own backyard.

Since our main focus in this project was on education, the Perspectiva team hosted three workshops for young people entitled 'Preventing Human Trafficking!' We ran these

CEELBAS/BEARR CONFERENCE

for the ill-served young people of Andrusul de Sus, Chircani, and Cahul. At them, we aimed to introduce this horrible phenomenon, outline ways of preventing it, and show the participants how to seek assistance.

In September, we continued our information campaign by hosting a film discussion with students at the Industrial-Pedagogic High School. Many students were shocked by our movie 'Exit', but they greatly appreciated the opportunity to learn more about human trafficking in a supportive environment.

Perspectiva hopes that through our efforts and with the support of The BEARR Trust we were able to make a small dent in the problem and help reduce the dreadful statistics on human trafficking.



Young people learn about trafficking issues at the 'Discoteca of Information'

Photo: Michelle Lynn Miller, Peace Corps Volunteer

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CEELBAS/BEARR Conference, 15 June 2009

'Backwards or Forwards? The challenges facing NGOs in Russia'

The second joint conference under our NGO Development Programme will concentrate on matters of key importance to all NGOs working in Russia or with Russian partners.

The conference will look at the whole range of issues: political, social, legal, bureaucratic and tax-related. The afternoon will be devoted to another key challenge: where to secure funding for NGO activities in the rapidly-changing Russian environment.

Plans are well advanced, but not all speakers are yet in place. The current programme can be found at http://www.bearr.org/en/events/CEELBAS/conf_09/NGO_challenges. It will be updated regularly. A booking form will also be made available on the website in due course. Those on BEARR's mailing list will receive the documents by email. To join the e-mailing list, please contact info@bearr.org

Speakers already in place include:

- **Prof Richard Sakwa**, University of Kent, on the political background
- **Daria Miloslavskaya**, Director, International Centre for Not-for-Profit Law, on laws, regulations and taxes
- **Elena Topoleva**, ASI, and **Olga Alexeeva**, CAF-Russia, on funding from Russian sources,
- **Anna Sevortian**, Centre for the Development of Democracy and Civil Society, on international funding.

This conference will cover the whole range of NGOs dealing with Russia, not just BEARR's health and welfare network, so please pass on this information to anyone you know who is involved with NGOs in other sectors.

ANNUAL LECTURE

The BEARR Trust Annual Lecture 2008

Culture and Society in Post-Communist Russia

The BEARR Trust's 2008 Annual Lecture was given by Dr Ekaterina Genieva OBE at Pushkin House on 23 October 2008. Nicola Ramsden, BEARR Trustee, reports.

Dr Genieva has been Director-General of the Russian State Library for Foreign Literature since the collapse of the Soviet Union, a position that places her at the heart of Russian sociocultural life. She gave a highly personal account, in which her own background and experiences appeared as an embodiment of changes in Russian society. Other threads woven through her talk included history, literature, politics, and the perennial question of personal and national identity. Her stimulating survey prompted many questions from the audience, so she went on to cover Russian-British relations, the rise of fascist groups in Russia, the role of the Orthodox Church, and the state of civil society.

If anyone needs convincing of the extent to which post-Soviet society is different from its predecessor, they need look no further than Dr Genieva's career. Her appointment (in her own view a most improbable one) as Director-General of the Library for Foreign Literature was, she believes, a sign of profound change. She describes herself as something of an anti-hero in terms of Soviet criteria: not a Communist; a practising Orthodox Christian of half-Jewish descent; and, almost as bad, the author of a thesis on James Joyce. Above all, she was a writer, not a bureaucrat destined to run a vast organisation with 150 branches throughout Russia.

Dr Genieva loves Russia. She understands what Virginia Woolf

meant by the 'holy disease' that can overcome those who have contact with Russia, and she confesses herself to be 'one hundred per cent infected'. She wants Russia to succeed, and more than once she returned to the question of whether post-Soviet society has failed to win the battle with former times. She believes that past regimes have betrayed the country, and can never be forgiven for the loss of 46 million people under Stalin, and 42 million in the Second World War. For Dr Genieva, the tragedy of Russia's history is encapsulated in the remote islands of Solovki, only 120 km from the North Pole, where one million people who 'were not needed' lost their lives in the first and largest Soviet concentration camp.

In the light of such horrors, and the fact that Russians were practically slaves for 75 years, Dr Genieva considers it a miracle that Russia has changed, as has the mentality of Russians. She reflected on Dostoevsky's view that it takes three generations to corrupt a nation. Could a renaissance be achieved in only two generations? Is Russia hopelessly handicapped by the removal of so many people in successive generations from its history and its economy? Is it handicapped today by the fact that many of the current generation have chosen to live abroad? The temptation to ask 'what if?' is strong, but as Dr Genieva says, 'history does not know subjunctive rules'. She believes that if



Russia is to succeed, it can only come from the grass roots, not from the top.

Dr Genieva has a vision for the Library for Foreign Literature, one that she never dreamed she would live to create. Her vision is for an international cultural centre, akin to the Pompidou Centre. Building on its immense stock of works in over 140 languages, and its collection of Russian émigré literature, Dr Genieva wants to build a cultural space that facilitates and represents inter-cultural, inter-religious and inter-ethnic dialogue.

The scale of Dr Genieva's ambitions contrasts with her initial doubts when offered the post of Director-General. She was eventually persuaded to take on the job by her hero and mentor, Father Alexander Men, the Orthodox priest of Jewish origin whose mission to prepare a generation for change came to a brutal end when he was murdered 18 years ago. Father Men's teachings and advice remain with her still; he helped her to understand how difficult it would be for the former Soviet people to deal with freedom. She still refers back to the subject of freedom

when she doubts the progress that has been made since Soviet times, and comforts herself with the belief that the attainment of freedom, to a degree that her parents never had, and the will to keep fighting for it, even when people are not always sure what to do with it, is one definition of success.

Dr Genieva thinks that the biggest question facing Russians now is 'What are we?' Russian literature of the 18th and 19th centuries reveals a constant search for identity, and a frequent characteristic has been the definition of identity in terms of common enemies: Jews or Georgians, for example. Russia has reverted to this mentality recently, as reflected in the decline of relations with Britain.

Sadly, intolerance is still a fact of Russian life. Immigration from Central Asia is a source of tension, and the reappearance of fascism a most worrying development. Casual attitudes to murders of 'persons of Caucasian nationality' reflect the Government's support for groups such as 'Nashi'. These groups provide a focus for young men brutalised by participation in the Chechen war, and with no other place in society to return to. They are used by security organisations and easily exploited by opponents of immigration. Their idea of 'Russianness' is a dangerous one.

How can the rise of this fascist brutality be countered? Certainly not with violence. The remedy must go beyond even education; what is needed is true enlightenment, and culture can play an important role in getting there. Dr Genieva has founded an Institute for Tolerance, to encourage debate. She also initiated the publication, sponsored by the Estonian Embassy, of a study of Pushkin by Juri Lotman, a leading academic who was based in Soviet Estonia. Equally respected by Russians and Estonians, Lotman's name gave the book a common cultural ownership. Its distribution around Russia encouraged Russians to see Estonia in a better light following the recent spat between the two countries (in which, according to Dr Genieva, 'everybody was silly').

Asked about remedies for the deterioration in relations with its neighbours, Dr Genieva examined the state of the body politic. Yeltsin had been surrounded by corruption. Putin is adept at manipulating popular opinion. Russia currently has a Prime Minister who is really the President, and a President who is a minor President. Not much can be done about this until Russia develops a body of trained, professional people who understand negotiation as a way of resolving problems and finding

beneficial solutions, and who work to make Russia a good neighbour in a European home.

Dr Genieva gave guarded approval to the role played by the Orthodox Church in developing a national identity. She admired its strategy of moving into the wasteland of lost values after the Soviet Union collapsed; she praised the restoration of churches, the pastoral work done by the Church, and the rise in the number of believers. But she was not sure that the Church's influence was a liberalising one: the Church is perhaps too much under the Government's thumb, and if Russia becomes an Orthodox country, there is a risk that church and state will become synonymous again, as in pre-Revolutionary times. Russia now has a large Islamic population, and the country should be openly multi-religious.

Finally, Dr Genieva dealt with the state of civil society in Russia. It is weak, true, but it did not even exist 25 years ago, and now there is something struggling to develop. The Government will tolerate civil society if it is tamed. Dr Genieva had no prescriptions for it. 'Civil society should know itself what it should do', was her ultimate, rather enigmatic conclusion.

The BEARR Trust Annual Lecture 2009

Quentin Peel, Financial Times

This year's lecture will be given by Quentin Peel, international affairs editor of the Financial Times since 1998, also leader and feature writer and author of the avidly-read column *Between the Lines*. As former chief correspondent in Moscow, he is a long-standing and acute observer of and commentator on the Russian scene. He will speak about some aspect of current Russian policy. Details will be circulated by email. If you are not already on BEARR's mailing list, please send your details to info@bearr.org.

The lecture and reception will be held once again at the premises of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, by kind invitation of the President, at **6.00 on 27 April**.

This will undoubtedly be a fascinating event, so please come along and bring all your friends.



BEARR NEWS

Jill Braithwaite

News of the death of Jill Braithwaite in November was received with great sadness by her many friends and supporters at The BEARR Trust.

Jill was a prime mover behind the British humanitarian effort in Moscow after the collapse of Communism, and a founder-trustee of The BEARR Trust. As the wife of the then British Ambassador in Moscow, Rodric Braithwaite, and a former diplomat herself, she never stood on the sidelines but got involved wherever she saw it was needed.

In those early days, as medical services and supplies collapsed, it was Jill in the Embassy who provided whatever coordination she could for the many people wanting to help the Russians through the difficult times of change. As the effort grew it became evident that a more organised framework for the work was required, and the idea of a new charitable trust was born. Among those involved was Maria Fairweather.

Maria recalls: 'We had all been agonising over what to call this new charity and no one came up with anything good. Jill was then staying with me and had to go into hospital

for a small op. When I went to see her the next day, still woozy from the anaesthetic but triumphant, Jill said 'I had a brilliant idea just as I was coming out of the anaesthetic - Bear with two Rs - British Emergency Aid to Russia and the Republics!' I shall never forget her pleasure and her laughter at this unexpected by-product. She was a wonderful woman and a wonderful friend.'

Jill Braithwaite was the inspiration behind the idea of using The BEARR Trust to help bring the wealth of knowledge of the British voluntary sector to the newly forming Russian NGOs.

Megan Bick recalls: 'Jill was a most passionate founder/director/trustee of BEARR, feeling for those who were struggling and refusing to be dispirited by the many obstacles that were put in the way of improving their lives. (It was coincidentally through starting up the Russian hospice movement that I first met Jill, who was supporting the late Victor Zorza in this.)'

Jill's funeral took place in Suffolk near their country cottage on 22 November. Tony Longrigg, Chairman of BEARR, who had worked with Jill



and Rodric in Moscow, represented the Trust and passed on the Trust's gratitude for all Jill had done. During the service, Rodric recalled Jill's time in Moscow getting the Trust under way, and all the effort she put in subsequently, travelling around Russia making contacts and helping distribute the much-needed aid. She remained active in this field to the end as Vice-Chairman of the Russian European Trust.

It is hard to believe that Jill's energy, commitment and charisma are no longer with us. She will be sorely missed by all those who knew her, both here and in Russia.

Sprint triathlon for Hope and Homes and BEARR

*by Nicola Ramsden,
BEARR trustee*

When I cautiously agreed to compete in the Hope and Homes sprint triathlon last September, I never expected that it would turn out to be such a fundraising success. I aimed to meet Hope and Homes' fundraising target of £500, and thinking that I would be lucky to get there, I pledged to give any excess raised to The BEARR Trust. In the event, more than 80 generous sponsors donated just over £3,000, a fantastic outcome.

Hope and Homes are raising money to close four orphanages in Romania and move some 300 children into family-based care. The sprint triathlon raised £150,000 in total, which will give a huge boost to their project. Conditions for children in orphanages in Romania are similar to those I encountered in Russia when I was working there in the 1990s and became a volunteer for ARC (Action for Russia's Children). ARC's founder, Sarah Philips, is now

a colleague on the board of trustees of BEARR. We are aware that the number of children in state institutions in Russia has barely decreased, and therefore hope that the money raised for BEARR through the sprint triathlon can be directed to a project that addresses these issues in an imaginative way.

I really appreciated all the encouragement and support I received in letters, emails and messages on my Justgiving site. It was as if everyone else knew as well as I did how daunting it was going to be to enter the world of lycra-clad, finely-tuned sporting professionalism often associated with the triathlon. Worse still, a sprint triathlon assumes that, as only half the normal distances are covered (400 metres swim, 20 kilometres cycle and 5 kilometres run) the competitors will go much faster! Luckily, Hope and Homes'

organisation was so good, and the atmosphere so friendly, that the event itself, run in early morning mist and then autumn sunshine through quiet lanes around St Albans, was a pleasure.

Would I do it again? I had expected this to be a once-in-a-lifetime experience and an excuse to dig my old Raleigh Clubman bike out of a spidery corner of the garage. But by a fluke, I won my age category and am now the proud owner of a trophy informing anyone who inspects our mantelpiece that I am 'Fastest Female 51+'. I'm not sure about this accolade, but I think I'm going to have to defend my title in 2009. If anyone would like to join me, Hope and Homes will hold their 2009 sprint triathlon on 4 October. As I discovered, lycra and lightweight bikes are not essential, you might achieve something unexpected, and it's all in a good cause.



Nicola (wearing No 24) with some of her fellow competitors

Photo Gareth Roberts

Book Launch, 1 April 2009

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

Ecologia Youth Trust will be hosting a book launch for **'KitezH, A Community Approach to Raising Children in Russia'** by **Dimitry Morozov**, the founder of the KitezH community. The event, co-sponsored by The BEARR Trust, will be held on 1 April at The BEARR Trust's premises in Southwark.

You are invited for drinks at 6:30pm, followed at 7pm by a presentation by Dimitry Morozov. David Dean OBE, Therapeutic Education consultant to KitezH since 1998, will also present his professional views on the work of KitezH.

To reserve a seat please email info@ecologia.org.uk.

Morozov is a former radio broadcaster who left Moscow during perestroika and retreated to the countryside to build his visionary community for foster families and orphans. Sixteen years later, he is the driving force behind two flourishing community villages for children, with plans to create more. The families take children out of orphanages and raise and educate them together in a supportive rural community environment.

Morozov says: 'However unusual conditions in Russia, and especially in KitezH, may be, we have been able to develop methods and procedures for working with difficult children that can help not only professionals working in children's institutions or foster parents, but also parents of 'normal', non-dysfunctional families. This book deals

with how a child's consciousness is formed and how we, as parents, can love our children in the right way: by preparing them for life in the real world.'

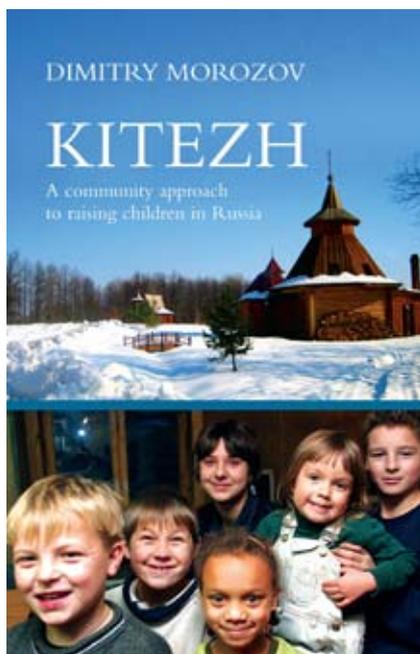
Ecologia Youth Trust is a charity based in Scotland that has supported the development of KitezH since it began in 1992, providing professional training, raising funds to build the villages and running a programme for international volunteers to teach English and take part in everyday life in the communities.

The BEARR Trust provides grants through its Small Grants Scheme, funded by Baker Botts, to help children leaving KitezH to pursue further and higher education.

Signed copies of the book will be available at the book launch or from Ecologia Youth Trust at £12.99 (+ £2 postage).

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Dates for your diary

1 April 2009

Lecture by Dimitry Morozov and launch of his book, 'Kitezh, A Community Approach to Raising Children in Russia'. Ecologia event sponsored by The BEARR Trust (See page 15 for details)

27 April 2009

The BEARR Trust Annual Lecture: Quentin Peel of the Financial Times (See page 13)

15 June 2009

CEELBAS/BEARR conference: Backwards or Forwards? The challenges facing NGOs in Russia (See page 11)

20 November 2009

The BEARR Trust Annual Conference 2009, probably on a child-centred theme.

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, Francis Callaway, Christopher Gerry, Daryl Hardman, Marcia Levy, Ann Lewis CMG, Tony Longrigg CMG (Chairman), Jenny Norton, Sarah Philips MBE, Nicola Ramsden, Robert Scallon

Staff: Information Officer: Renate Wright

Volunteers: Philip Michaelson, Martin Edwards, Elena Verigo, Antony Lewis, Ute Chatterjee, Charlotte Wright

Newsletter: Editor: Ann Lewis; layout: Leila Carlyle

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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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