

CEELBAS/BEARR Conference, May 2008

Russia Under a New President: Opportunities and Challenges for NGOs in the Health Field

This conference on 9 May 2008 inaugurated the NGO Development Programme, a joint venture of The BEARR Trust and CEELBAS.

The theme of this first conference was chosen to give NGOs access to the substantial evidence compiled by universities on what is happening to the health of the Russian population, healthcare in Russia and the Russian government's health policies; and to pass on to academics the hands-on experience of a variety of NGOs working in related fields.

Health reform

In opening the first session, **Dr Christopher Gerry** (SSEES, UCL) set the scene by analysing *The Political Economy Context of Health Reforms in Russia after the Presidential Election*. His concern was to make his audience aware that who exercises power is the most important determinant of reform.

Transition is over in Russia, and a challenging phase of modernisation is beginning. The decade of 'reform plus no money' in the 1990s has given way to greater prosperity since 2000, as Russia started to grow strongly and build up foreign reserves. Now the world's eighth largest economy, Russia can afford higher wages for healthcare workers, and investment in clinics and high-tech medical equipment. Medvedev begins his term with the macroeconomic indicators on his side: a current account surplus, rising investment, spare capacity and a balanced budget. All well and good, argued Gerry, but Medvedev has also inherited significant structural weaknesses and a new political elite

*Report by Nicola Ramsden,
BEARR Trustee*



that may not support the reforms needed to tackle the problems of an ageing and shrinking population.

Russia's current wealth is dependent on high natural resource prices. Manufacturing and small enterprise are still feeble; corruption is spreading; and growing restraints on freedom are affecting NGOs. The health legacy of the underfunded, unresponsive, centralised Soviet system, followed by failed market reforms in the 1990s, is a deterioration in health and life expectancy to the level of Peru and Eritrea. Deaths from cardiovascular diseases and cancer, diabetes and TB, HIV/AIDS, accidents and violence, indicate that many of Russia's health problems are behavioural in origin.

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Gerry believes that Putin, with his much-publicised espousal of pro-natal policies, missed the point, and that Medvedev, unless he tackles the causes of death at their roots, risks wasting the new resources. Medvedev's language so far is encouraging, and suggests that he genuinely understands the challenges. He talks of fighting corruption and bureaucracy, and promoting freedom, private property, and an independent judiciary.

But Gerry asks: will the new political elite accept this? For Russia's health problems must be tackled by dealing with environmental degradation, alcohol abuse, accidents, violence, smoking, diet, psychological stress and attitudes to risk. The administration needs to make health promotion and disease prevention as much a part of the system as medical responses. This may well encounter resistance from lobbies with economic and political power and influence.

Larisa Popovich, CEO of ROSNO-MS medical insurance company and Deputy Chairman of the Social Council for Patients' Rights at the Russian Public Health Inspectorate, followed with a *Russian Perspective on the Evolution of Russia's Health Reforms*. She stressed that the Russian government is well aware of the behavioural causes of Russian health problems and of the implications of an ageing population. She described reforms of the health system since the 1980s, when the first attempts to introduce market mechanisms were made. By the mid 1990s it was clear that these were not effective, and in a second phase of reform, the government struggled to guarantee free medical assistance but was challenged by lack of funds and huge regional disparities in income. A third phase of reform began in 2000, and addressed the issues of access to health care and equality of treatment.

By 2005, rising government revenues allowed a fourth phase of reform focussing on the quality of health care. The National Priority Project for Health was drawn up to improve Russia's socio-economic policies in line with the UN's Millennium Development Goals.

There are already encouraging signs of improvement. Infant mortality is falling, as is the death rate, and the birth rate is rising. Real health spending through the Federal and regional budgets has increased sharply, although Popovich qualified this with the observation that it is still less as a percentage of GDP than in similarly wealthy countries.

Looking to the future, health policies for 2008 to 2012 will focus on quality, efficiency, and raising the status of health as a national issue. The government is examining UK and German models of public/private partnership, and is also looking at the role NGOs can play in health reform. This seems wide: implementation, outreach, advocacy, fundraising and exchange of information with international medical institutions.

Popovich concluded that, for the first time, the Russian government sees health reform as a task to be shared with business and with NGOs.

Behavioural factors

Opening the panel discussion, **Dr Chris Davis** (Oxford) asked what underlay the pattern of illness and destructive behaviours in Russia. **Dr Alexei Bobrik** (Open Health Institute, Moscow), Larisa Popovich and **Dr Benoit Mathivet** (CEELBAS) all gave examples of government responses.

Bobrik said that the introduction of fines for not wearing seat belts has had an immediate effect. The government has belatedly signed the WHO Tobacco Convention and is working on health warnings on cigarette packets. It has also demonstrated that it is serious about tackling AIDS. However, it is 'still early days' in dealing with alcoholism.

Richard Ehlers recalled the problems of child malnutrition he encountered as an EEP/VSO volunteer in the mid 1990s. Popovich described the regional programmes of child nutrition which have been extended from infants to school-age children, though these would take years to have an effect as poverty is still deep-seated in many regions; army conscripts are still often severely under-weight. Davis pointed to recent studies showing improvements in the incidence of rickets, and Mathivet reminded us that government policies on screening also include diet.

Dr Harald Lipman (ICHARM) agreed that some of the essential foundations for long-term behavioural change will have to do battle with interested lobbies and the government's desire to raise revenues. But much progress can be made by training doctors in cardio-respiratory prevention, educating the public, screening, and providing simple preventative drugs such as aspirin and statins. He estimates that reducing mortality to EU levels would boost Russian GDP by 5%.

Michael McCulloch (Chairman of The BEARR Trust) asked whether it is possible for health reform to be a truly public dialogue in Russia, noting that Popovich's list of roles for NGOs included only one item of service provision. How responsive would the Russian public be to pressures for behavioural change? Popovich replied that the government knows that reform must have a proper legislative basis, and must also involve open dialogue with the public, citing the Ministry of Health website as evidence. She regretted the public's under-estimation of the importance of health, and tendency to undervalue medical care because it has traditionally been free. However, informal payments to secure medical care have increased to such an extent that the government now judges it politically acceptable – and preferable – to introduce a formal system of agreed payments, with better social insurance for the poorest. She also pointed out that West European PPP health models face strong opposition from medical lobbies.

Professor George Kolankiewicz (Director, CEELBAS) offered a sociologist's viewpoint. He referred to studies on well-being, which link health and longevity to people's sense of how much control they have over their lives, their

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In Putin's second term it became clear that his public praise for NGOs masked a distrust for certain sectors of civil society. Looking to the future under Medvedev, it appears that Putin is expected to oversee domestic matters, leaving foreign policy to the President. Ledeneva's final question was whether this division will last, or whether both men will ultimately neglect domestic health policy, leaving it to be sorted out by means of some sort of social insurance system.

Floriana Fossato (SSEES, UCL), on *Civil Society Online*, noted that use of the Internet in Russia has increased rapidly, but the development of the 'blogosphere' underlines Ledeneva's observation about the preference for individual activity over organised membership.

Almost 30% of Russians used the Internet at least once in 2007, compared with only 8% in 2002. Usage varies significantly between regions; almost 60% of Moscow residents and 40% in other major cities, against just over 20% across the regions.

Concentration in larger cities is also a feature of blogging. There are now 3.8 million blogs in Russia, but their rate of growth and activity seems to be diminishing. The 230,000 blog communities tend to be more active than individual blogs, but a marked feature of the blogosphere is that it is dominated by a small number of trusted leaders.

It has been assumed that the Internet would promote democratisation in Russia, as in the West, and given its apparent universal potential. In reality, Internet development in Russia has adapted to the national environment, and research by the Reuters Institute suggests that, in general, the impact of the Internet is shaped by the national social and political context in which it is deployed. The Internet does not transform society; rather, society transforms the Internet.

In Russia, in the absence of trusted institutions, the Internet remains 'a device to test one's own circle' and effectively reproduces well-tested mechanisms of propaganda and manipulation. Networks generally consist of closed and intolerant clusters of like-minded people who are rarely willing to cooperate with other groups, and political norms are more likely to be replicated than challenged. The authorities can manipulate or intimidate leaders, and exploit widespread distrust to ensure that Internet linkages do not develop into alliances for action.

More optimistically, the Internet offers opportunities in health, where the state is more open, and constructive cooperation is possible with NGOs and state agencies, as well as with popular bloggers involved in professional and charitable activities, and with regional media outlets organising charity events. RuNet is a powerful disseminator of information.

ability to achieve their goals, and the extent to which they receive recognition for success. Kolankiewicz suggested that a 'culture of success' would influence health in Russia as much as tinkering with the medical system.

Civil society

Moving on to *Recent and Prospective Developments in Civil Society in Russia*, Dr Alena Ledeneva (SSEES, UCL) examined *Civil Society in Russia under Putin and Medvedev*. She highlighted the low awareness of civil society in the population, and that many people have a different understanding of the term from that in the West. Mostly, people see it as a civilised society, where people behave in a humane manner towards one another, rather than one where social institutions and individuals function independently of political power. Indicators of the development of civil society, such as those produced by Freedom House, show a deterioration in Russia since 1997. Officially registered NGOs fell from 600,000 in 2005 to 250,000 in 2006, partly in response to the government's requirements for re-registration, and tighter restrictions on foreign NGOs.

The statistics do not tell the whole story; there is a great deal going on in terms of activity by individuals and informal, unregulated groups that is not reflected in official figures. Ledeneva argues that it was never going to be easy for civil society to take root in Russia, as the communist era left a hatred of 'membership'. Putin's efforts to create an 'organised' civil society through the establishment of the (closed membership) Civic Forum (*obshaya palata* or Public Chamber) in 2001 have contributed to a decline in NGO numbers.

However, Ledeneva estimates that neither informal third sector activity nor the officially sanctioned variety is having much impact yet on Russian society, at least as measured by public awareness of any of the government's National Projects in healthcare, education, agriculture and affordable housing. A year after their launch in 2006, 70% of the Russian population knew nothing of any programmes to be implemented in their region or city.

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Anna Sevortian (Deputy Director, Centre for the Development of Democracy and Human Rights in Moscow, and Visiting Fellow, Cambridge University and UCL) spoke on *Domestic and Foreign NGOs in Russia During the Putin Era*, and introduced participants to 'GONGOs' – government-operated NGOs.

There is undoubtedly a tougher framework now for NGOs, but Sevortian contrasted the stringent treatment of NGOs receiving foreign funding (who are liable to be scrutinised to the point of paralysis by both the Registration Department and the tax authorities) with a more tolerant approach to those helping children or the elderly. Many companies are starting charitable foundations, and young business people often aspire to become philanthropists. In-kind donations (with the risk of some corruption) are already a useful source of healthcare support.

The key to survival for an NGO is to avoid political affiliation or any activity that suggests an alternative agenda to those in power. Most difficulty is encountered by human rights, ecological and environmental activists. As well as facing political opposition, such groups are unlikely to be nominated to the Civic Forum, which handles considerable state resources in cooperation with approved NGOs. Sevortian pointed out that, despite its celebrities, the Civic Forum is not a transparent organisation, and cannot be expected to provide civilian oversight of the healthcare system.

Two questions arose in the discussion: how do users know when to trust information on the Internet (Kolankiewicz) and how far is the decline in NGO numbers due to self-filtering as well as regulation (**Elena Schmidt**, Healthprom)?

On trust, Fossato pointed to Yandex analysis identifying a few leading bloggers who have built up a strong reputation and regularly contribute to the most active debates. Government-sponsored NGOs, e.g. those associated with Nashi, get less response.

Sevortian thought it impossible to isolate self-filtering from the effects of regulation, since the legislation is so wide-ranging that the arbitrary closure of a few NGOs sends a signal to the others. Bobrik argued that GONGOs are not entirely bad, since it is a good thing for NGOs to be well-resourced, but Sevortian deplored mechanisms that permit the selective targeting of NGOs and arbitrary decisions to dub them 'extremist'. Ledeneva proposed ironically that Putin be awarded a medal for strengthening civil society, as 'what doesn't kill us makes us stronger'.

The NGO view

The final group of speakers, all from NGOs, covered *Health NGOs in Russia During the Putin Era*. All these have contributions elsewhere in this Newsletter: **Maria von Moltke**, Rehabilitation of the Child, St Petersburg, on page 6; **Nicholas Colloff**, Oxfam, on page 5; and **Dr Alexei Bobrik**, Open Health Institute, Moscow, on page 9. The views of **Oscar Franklin**, Age Concern, are covered by

the article by his Russian colleague Eduard Kariukhin on page 8.

Von Moltke concluded that NGOs have to become increasingly Russian in order to survive. Colloff and Franklin think that it is now time for Russian NGOs to move from service provision to campaigning. Franklin thinks that the regions, where territory and power battles seem to be diminishing, may be more fertile ground for this. Bobrik is confident that the OHI will successfully complete the transition from foreign to domestic funding, but warned that many other NGOs are not strong enough to do so.

The way forward

Summing up in the final session, Davis expected a strong commitment to health from the Russian government, and, if modernisation succeeds, the resources to back it up. NGOs must look for the open doors, and the areas where their efforts will have the greatest multiplier effect. Hardman was struck by the need to define terms with partners, recognising that words have subtly different meanings across cultures. She also noted the importance of finding the right individual to work with, given the mistrust of organisations. NGOs should not forget that local media channels are always looking for appealing non-political stories. Gerry concluded that there is no point in operating without the support of a powerful constituency.

McCulloch, in conclusion, noted the speakers' evaluation of how changes have been brought about, and how far the Russian health sector has moved in the past decade. The structures are starting to acquire permanence, and as financing becomes more plentiful we must consider our priorities for its application.

Kolankiewicz ended by calling for a radical change in how projects operate, going beyond dialogue and information exchange. He warned against civil society settling into middle-class self-help – a tool for those who least need it. We should constantly aim to 'shake the tree' so nothing innovative is missed. Being in touch with the new generation of Russian NGOs is essential. CEELBAS provides the opportunity for young scholars to emerge from NGO fieldwork, and would like the legacy of its involvement to be sustainable links between NGOs.

In the discussion of future work under the CEELBAS/BEARR Programme, participants favoured a comparative approach to issues across the post-Soviet world. It was felt useful to concentrate on health and welfare because this covers most sections of the population in the region and concentrates on aspects of health and welfare in which UK NGOs have expertise. Most important, access to healthcare was cited throughout the day as the cause of simmering anger in Russia and its neighbours, and an issue to which government antennae are therefore well tuned.

A fuller version of this report may be found on the BEARR website at <http://www.bearr.org/node/1326>

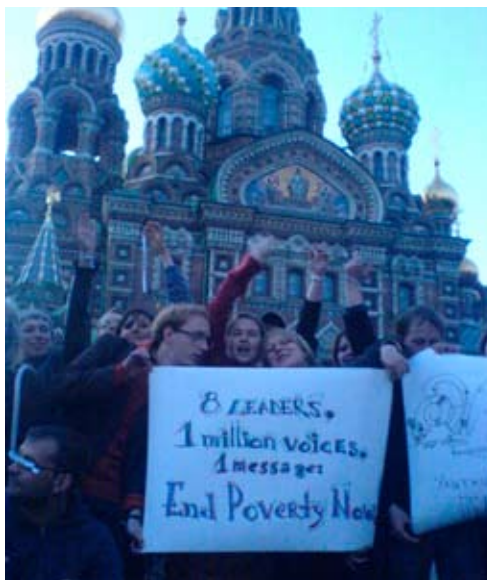
Beyond herding cats: NGO collaboration in Russia

When the Global Call to Action against Poverty (GCAP) was launched at the World Social Forum in 2005, no one quite expected the impressive impact the coalition would have. In less than twelve months, GCAP had grown into the world's largest ever anti-poverty alliance, whose organisations together represented more than 150 million people, with national campaigns in over 80 countries.

One of which was Russia. Launching GCAP Russia could have been seen as a quixotic venture in a context where civil society organisations are underdeveloped and the practice of collaboration between organisations rare. Though many Russian NGOs provide good quality services to their constituencies, their experience of effective and sustained advocacy and campaigning is limited, especially when the topic at hand was as broad as 'poverty' both at home and abroad.

Despite these difficulties a small group of organisations, of diverse outlooks, areas of work and means of support, did come together to try and build a coalition. Some of the early meetings were long and exasperating, more akin to 'herding cats' than coalescing to a common purpose. At one moment of high frustration, participants were challenged to say why they were there (at a training session on advocacy and campaigning). To which one participant replied, 'Because Vitaliy (Oxfam's policy officer) is very persuasive and Nicholas (Oxfam's Country Director) has a charming smile!'

Two catalysts transformed this situation. The first was the need to host common events ahead of the G8 St Petersburg Summit in 2006. St Petersburg coalition members devised a series of popular mobilization events to draw people's



attention to the summit and its importance for addressing poverty globally. The practical focus of actual events gave people the experience of working together for simple, measurable outcomes; and, their success reinforced confidence.

The second was modest financing from the British Embassy to support a series of workshops to enhance GCAP members' ability to interact with their clients, understand their needs, and build from these evidence-based advocacy approaches and campaigns.

Rather than make this an exercise in theoretical education, participants worked on a selected theme: access to health care for disadvantaged groups (such as homeless people, people living with disabilities, and women in prison). They conducted qualitative and quantitative research in the regions and across sector groups, to produce compelling evidence on issues related to access. With national experts, they shaped this into a compelling national report, with key recommendations, that was submitted to the State Duma committee on health reform, relevant Ministry of Health officials and the Minister of Health herself.

Nicholas Colloff
*Country Director,
Oxfam GB in the
Russian Federation*

Backed by media coverage and a subsequent open letter to the Minister, one of the key recommendations was immediately adopted, announced and enacted: removing the requirement of people with a permanent disability to register their status every year. This removes them from a time consuming, costly and often humiliating process. This early success has immeasurably strengthened the coalition's self-confidence and sense of mission.

Finally, there have been two critical factors in the coalition's success. First, our relative lack of financial resources. This focused decision making on what is critical and meant that members of GCAP are value driven, not simply carrying out activities for an external donor. Second, maintaining our informal structure as a network with no organisational overheads, each organisation offering what 'sweat equity' they can; and, critically, not immersed in time-consuming conversations about who ought to occupy which 'official role' in the organisation.

The website for GCAP Russia is www.protivbed.ru. Further information on GCAP Russia (as well as copies of the health report – whole report in Russian, executive summary in English) are obtainable from the Oxfam GB office.

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Journal of a medical NGO: or how to adapt to a changing environment

In Russia, one child in four is born with a handicap. This includes asthma and cerebral palsy. Physiotherapy had no tradition in Russia and is only now gradually being introduced, mainly through Western initiatives.

My colleagues and I have been involved in charity work in Russia since 1990, and our problems over the years will show how hard it is to be a medical NGO in Russia.

Our organisation, 'Rehabilitation of the Child', started from very humble beginnings in 1990. Today we run a modern, private, medical day clinic for handicapped children with cerebral palsy and asthma. Our clinic rents 550 sq.m. in a municipal kindergarten

and employs 45 medical and administrative staff who treat up to 125 children per day free of charge. The officially approved therapy is based on a combination of Eastern and Western medicine. All doctors and therapists are fully licensed and we work closely with the Paediatric Academy of St Petersburg. To broaden our financial basis we run an orthopaedic workshop on our premises.

Since 1998 we are a registered Regional Russian Charitable Foundation and our centre is run on modern management techniques. The Foundation is controlled by a Board of Directors and a Supervisory Council and its accounts are subject to an independent annual audit.

This all sounds pretty normal to a Western reader but it has been very difficult to get to where we are. Our medical head, Gennady Romanov, was initially working in 50 sq.m. in a state hospital. There was no equipment and all treatment was done on the floor. Yet the young staff were dedicated and enthusiastic about their private initiative.

With time we moved to larger premises, kitted out with Western equipment. There was a wave of sympathy for the children's plight in the 'New Russia'. Clothes, baby-food, medicines and vitamins were freely donated and handed out by us. Our centre soon became a haven of warmth and medical therapy for distressed families.

Employees with 3-4 jobs, monies from the West carried in cash, and handouts to officials were the norm. In the 'wild East' charity was abused for ulterior motives. As a result the authorities stopped nearly all imports and the first NGOs were closed down. We had to adapt to

Maria von Moltke 'Rehabilitation of the Child', St Petersburg

the new conditions. We were restricted to providing cash and know how, and needed a bank account. After 2 Russian banks had folded on us we ended up with Dresdner Bank, a haven of normality in the raging chaos.

As the economy developed, the legal structures were tightened month by month. The ever-changing new laws eventually made it possible for us to register as a Russian charity in 1998. This entailed a transparent structure and audited annual accounts. Our accountant had to have further training. As a charitable organisation we decided to become whiter than white, which proved vital in the years to come.

The Putin years brought tighter controls, rising standards of living and awakening national pride and confidence. Foreign NGOs were made to re-register and put under pressure to work with the authorities. New legislation allowed the state to close down unwanted charities. The administrative requirements forced smaller NGOs to give up. Some had to cease their activities, others were evicted from their premises.

As a Russian NGO we fared better, but had our own problems. We had an ominous visit from an 'inspector' from Moscow, to check whether we were truly engaged in medical work. Within weeks high-ranking regional medical officers tried to lure us into the state health system. We did not budge, and were given notice to vacate our centre by the city authorities, in spite of an official 10 year lease. Only high-level political intervention, petitions from parents and letters from advisors to the President got us off the hook. But for



Photos taken by Maria von Moltke at the Centre in St Petersburg.

how long? The city offered alternative accommodation: uninhabitable ruins needing millions of investment.

In the midst of all this, an anonymous denunciation accusing us of terrorism, espionage, money laundering and medical malpractice was sent to the Public Prosecutor. We suspect a disgruntled former employee. As children were involved, we were put under severe scrutiny: inspectors for weeks and months, no stone unturned. Nothing was ever found. Our early decision, to be 'whiter than white', had paid off.

But the writing was on the wall. We had to scale down our foreign status even further. By law we were a Russian organisation, and donations from the West were unwelcome and suspicious. Also money was gradually drying up from the West. There had been too many irregularities and people were asking: 'What are the wealthy Russians doing for their own children?' We started to shift our

from our boards. In co-operation with the city authorities we opened our orthopaedic workshop to children from state schools and institutions.

Our reputation for quality and excellence was acknowledged by the city authorities and medical circles. But we were an independent private organisation, which did not fit the bill. Until one day late last year NTV showed a documentary on our centre. At first it looked like another feather in our cap. But where there is light there is darkness. Within hours we had hundreds of emails and our telephones never stopped. People from all over the country turned up at the door with their handicapped children. We were stretched to capacity. We always knew that we had a useful role in society, but we never imagined the scale of the misery of Russia's handicapped children.

To conclude, there are new clouds on the horizon. Further measures are planned to curb the activities of



fundraising to Russia, an arduous task because it has no tradition. As one door closed, another opened. Friends in Moscow have for the past four years staged an annual Charity Ball, with Governor Valentina Matvienko and Svetlana Medvedeva as patrons. It became a resounding success and today the proceeds cover nearly half of our fast-rising annual budget. And it is all Russian money!

Also to become more Russian we started phasing out foreign nationals

medical NGOs which are not prepared to work with the state.

To summarise, our main problems in the Putin era have been lack of support and appreciation of our work and failing legal security. By the same token our main achievement has been to stay in the race.

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BEARR/ CEELBAS NGO Development Programme

This collaborative venture between The BEARR Trust and the academic consortium CEELBAS, intended to promote an exchange of information, experience and expertise between academic and NGO specialists, has got off to a flying start in its first year.

CEELBAS kindly supported BEARR's 2007 Annual Conference by funding some of the speakers from the region, and will do the same with the 2008 (see page 12) and probably 2009 Annual Conferences.

Our first truly joint venture, the May 2008 Conference reported extensively in this Newsletter, was agreed by both sides to have been very successful. Prof George Kolankiewicz, Director of CEELBAS, commented: 'It was a useful and enjoyable event, and bodes well for the series'.

We are now working together on a seminar or workshop in the spring of 2009 which will deal with the problem of securing funding for NGOs in Russia and the region in the greatly-changed environment of the early 21st century. This will, we hope, provide insights into new sources of funding, from Russian and other countries' own resources, whether governmental or private, as well as international sources of one kind or another. We hope to commission some research particularly into funding sources for the health and welfare sectors, though the workshop may range more widely.

Watch this space, and www.bearr.org, for further information, or email info@bearr.org to be put on our mailing list.

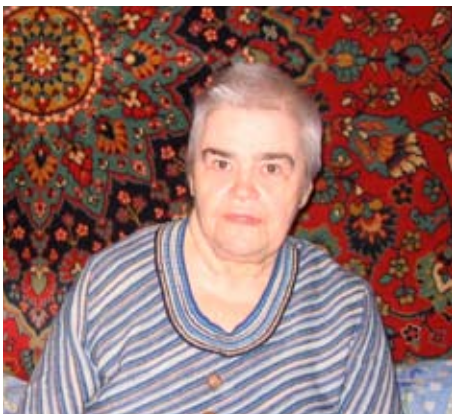
NGOS IN RUSSIA

Working together to support the elderly

by *Eduard Kariukhin, 'Dobroe Delo'*

Tatiana Pavlovna Lebedeva is 78 and lives alone in one room of a communal flat in Moscow. She spent her working life as a doctor specialising in gynaecology. Her father was a victim of Stalin and never returned from the gulag. Her mother and older brother are both dead. 10 years ago, she had to undergo a serious spinal operation. Once she returned home, Tatiana Pavlovna quickly realised that the support provided by the local Social Services department was not going to be adequate for her needs.

Tatiana Pavlovna had complex care needs: food preparation, bathing, washing her clothes and cleaning her room were all beyond her. However the state social worker restricted her help to running errands to the shops.



Then a friend advised Tatiana Pavlovna to contact Dobroe Delo and helped her to make the first phone call. That was in 2000. Since then, her life has markedly changed for the better. She is regularly visited by a doctor and a physical rehabilitation specialist. Two homecare assistants help her to prepare food and clean her room. Dobroe Delo can supply orthopaedic equipment and care necessities, and prescribe and supply

medicine. Tatiana Pavlovna says 'I couldn't survive without Dobroe Delo and their people. They keep me alive and keep me in contact with the world. I look forward to their visits so much – they are my friends as well as my helpers'.

Dobroe Delo (Good Deed) was established in February 2000 by two medical gerontologists and a nurse. It has three main aims:

- to improve the quality of life of vulnerable older people, especially of victims of totalitarian oppression, by providing medical and social support, legal help and historical rehabilitation
- to improve the capacity and coordination of the gerontological sector in Russia
- to research and publicise social gerontology

Our homecare model is based on interdisciplinary teams of doctors, nurses, homecare assistants and physiotherapists, who deliver a complex of care based on ongoing needs assessments. Dobroe Delo is currently helping 250 older people who live in Moscow, mainly poor, vulnerable and isolated. This work is mainly funded by United Way, a US charity.

The organisation's work in improving the capacity of the ageing sector is based on a different idea: that social NGOs can be effective partners to the state in the provision of care to older people, and can help create a more stable democracy through the development of a sustainable civil society. This programme took its



Eduard Kariukhin, centre, with older volunteers in Petrozavodsk who provide psycho-social support to vulnerable older people.

first steps in 2002 at an international seminar of the leaders of 20 NGOs, which was attended by Age Concern England. The ageing sector in Russia is fragmented, with weak capacity and low survival rates for NGOs. Dobroe Delo's activities have helped to provide channels of communication, information, a means of exchanging experience and mutual support to this underdeveloped sector.

The work continued with funding for a two-year project from the EU, which led to the development of a coalition of ageing NGOs reaching right across Russia. Coalition members have a range of activities from creative art therapy to legal advice. Age Concern England practitioners provided peer-to-peer training sessions on volunteering and service development and on volunteer advocacy, and fundraising training by Russian experts.

The results have been very positive. Seven organisations have received grants for their services from local Russian sources, and others continue to develop their local services to older people.

The coalition's other main area of activity is political influencing. Coalition members have various links with their local authorities and Deputies. The effectiveness of

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these links varies depending on the relationships and experience involved. The coalition decided that it would be necessary to lobby power more effectively in order to bring about lasting change, and has coordinated several lobbying campaigns. More are planned, including one to influence strategic national programmes so that older people are included in the consultation, planning and delivery phases.

A new tranche of funding has been received from DFID which will enable the coalition to develop its work over the next four years, helping to provide advocacy and volunteering services for older people in many regions of Russia that never make the news.

The coalition is in its early days still, and much work remains to be done in developing the potential of the ageing sector and its ability to help older people to improve their own lives. However, it hopes that where

cases of acute need such as Tatiana Pavlovna's exist, it will be able to reach out and help these vulnerable older people.

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From activism to professionalism: NGOs fighting AIDS in Russia

The first non-governmental organisations, both international and Russian, started working in Russia in the field of HIV/AIDS about 10 years ago, not always welcomed by the local decision-makers or the medical community, especially given the NGOs' involvement in the controversial area of harm reduction and sensitive human rights issues.

The majority of AIDS-service NGOs have always focused their efforts on the implementation of prevention programmes, which have not received proper attention from governmental institutions, or on advocacy activities aimed at raising awareness about the problem of HIV/AIDS. However, over time, NGOs in Russia began to demonstrate professionalism in other areas which are not usually considered traditional for non-governmental organisations.

For example, within the framework of the GLOBUS project (funded by the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria) an NGO Consortium led by the Open Health Institute has developed effective project management and built a reliable monitoring and evaluation system. During the four years of the project's implementation the NGO Consortium has ensured an uninterrupted supply of medicines and laboratory equipment worth \$15 million, conducted training for 5,000 regional medical specialists, and launched a mass-scale ARV-treatment programme that now provides life-saving medication to almost 3,000 patients in 10 regions of the Russian Federation covering 20% of the country's population.

In fact, through these activities NGOs have established certain standards and guidelines for the implementation of infection control programmes financed by the state. A direct indication to the recognized professionalism and the growing role of the Russian NGOs was their participation

*by Alexey Bobrik,
Open Health Institute, Moscow*

in the National Priority Health Project that started in Russia two years ago. Now, Russian AIDS-service NGOs and self-help organisations of people living with HIV have gained representation in all national HIV coordinating bodies and are able actively to influence practice through expert opinion and direct funding.

Thus, AIDS-service NGOs in Russia, which often started work in a hostile environment, have been able in one decade to earn respect from the government and to progress from small pilot projects to big comprehensive programmes. Today non-governmental organisations are one of the key players in fighting HIV/AIDS in Russia.

continues over



HIV prevention: NGO-run needle exchange project in St Petersburg

SMALL GRANTS SCHEME

BEARR Trust Small Grants Scheme 2008

The BEARR Trust was delighted to receive many good applications for its grants this year. After lengthy deliberation, the following were awarded grants.

For projects on 'Helping the homeless reintegrate into society' (Russia only), the grant goes to **UNESCO Club 'Dignity of the child' in Volgograd.**

The project covers research, publicity, setting up self-help groups and training peer support, and running two seminars with relevant NGOs and statutory bodies as well as a round table including them all. Homeless children are to be part of all events.

This award is sponsored by the law firm Baker Botts in Moscow, who also continue to fund grants for students from the Kitezh orphan children's community (see page 11).

For projects on 'Relieving the distress of human trafficking' (whole region), two awards were made:

Institute for Democracy, Moldova – Project on 'Increasing of the Role of Police and Civil Society in Fighting the Trafficking in Women and Girls'

and
Perspectiva, Moldova – Project on 'Preventing human trafficking through information: outreach to Moldova's southern villages'

The Trust offers its warm congratulations to the NGOs awarded grants, and looks forward to following

their progress. A report on their activities will appear on the BEARR website and in the Newsletter in due course.

The Trust was particularly impressed by the quantity and quality of the applications under the trafficking heading. This is obviously a major gap in provision in all the border areas of our region. Applications came from everywhere from Murmansk to Kyrgyzstan, Karelia to Azerbaijan.

The Trust would gladly have supported a further three NGOs if funds had been available. If anyone knows of possible funders for the following projects, BEARR would be delighted to pass on details:

Association of Women Scientists, Armenia – 'Awareness-raising about Trafficking in the Regions and Rural Communities of Armenia with the Aim of Preventing the Phenomenon of Trafficking'

Legal Centre for Women's Initiatives 'Sana Sezim', Shymkent, South Kazakhstan – To continue a successful programme of awareness-raising and outreach aimed particularly at 15 to 18-year-olds.

Votum (together with 'Faith, Hope, Love'), Odessa, Ukraine – Project to set up a Training Centre to educate volunteers, government officials and NGOs in the perils of trafficking and how to combat it, and to train further trainers.

If you have any ideas about possible funders for the 2009 Small Grants Scheme, in any field of health and welfare and in any country or group of countries, please contact info@barr.org. BEARR provides a safe channel for making grants to NGOs in the region on a competitive basis.

The 2007 Scheme

Grants were made in 2007 to two organisations helping orphans and the homeless integrate into society: the Kitezh children's community in Kitezh, and Nochlezhka in St Petersburg.

BEARR is grateful to the Moscow office of the law firm Baker Botts for funding the 2007 scheme.

A report on the second year of the **Kitezh** project is on the next page.

The **Nochlezhka** project in St Petersburg aims to improve cooperation between the state and non-state sectors in dealing with homeless addicts, partly through training for staff at night shelters. The project is still ongoing following some initial delay. An introductory seminar was held in November-December 2007, and further work continues on disseminating more widely the good experience of Nochlezhka's own night shelter in dealing with this group of homeless people. A full report will appear in a future issue of this Newsletter.

NGOs fighting AIDS *from previous page*

Very often, NGOs are the first to draw attention to existing problems, attract funding, and start innovative programmes. One present trend is a rapid professionalisation of NGOs, with some of them becoming powerful organisations with qualified managerial personnel and experts, capable of

successfully implementing large-scale international and national projects. Arguably, it is AIDS-service NGOs that represent the most vivid example of the successful development of civil society in the Russian Federation.

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Kitezh – from orphans to students

In 2007-8 the BEARR Small Grants Scheme continued its support for the Kitezh Children's Community.

The grant covers most of the cost of maintaining two students at Moscow universities, Vasily Burdin (18) at Moscow Academy of Economics and Law and Valentina Kampuchean (19) at the Russian State University for Humanities. Both students have adapted well to city life, and managed to look after themselves, control their own money and achieve success in their studies. They both still regard Kitezh as their home, and visit frequently. Kitezh is very pleased with their successful integration into society. Both youngsters are orphans from Kaluga who joined families at Kitezh ten years ago. Their success is a testament to Kitezh's work to rehabilitate orphan children.

The students speak for themselves:

Vasily

‘The first year at Moscow university has gone well. I have completed all my exams. To study in Moscow after school at Kitezh wasn't hard, I think because I prepared well. I like living in Moscow because there is a freedom of activity. I have not made many friends in Moscow, but I think this problem will go with time.’

‘At university I communicate with my professors and many students but most of them are only interested in drinking beer. So sometimes I need somebody who can understand me and my ideas. At first, when I came to Moscow, I thought that now I will be able to do just what I want. That was an illusion, and now I think that business and studying are more important and useful in my life than just having fun.’

‘One more thing I learned is that now I must control everything I do: what I spend, when I come back home, how to use my free time and many other things. I hope that what I want will come true in future. And to get it I must work and work and work.’

Vasily does work experience at Baker Botts during his holidays, which he enjoys very much. He enjoys the challenge of being given difficult tasks to complete, and being part of a serious work environment. Vasily enjoys music, writes his own songs and plays the piano and guitar.

Baker Botts have been greatly impressed by the Kitezh concept and the students themselves, and have generously agreed to increase their grant for the next year.

Valentina

‘This year was my second year in university. My studies were quite successful. This year it was harder than in my first year, and examination sessions were very difficult, but it is still very interesting. Next year is an important year, because all students have to choose the department where they are going to do their graduate work in their final year. I think I will choose Theory of Literature.’

‘After finishing my 5 years' study, my long term idea is to come back to Kitezh to work with children in the school, but first I want to experience life as an adult in society, to learn to rely on myself. As a profession I have many choices: teacher, translator, work in publishing, or another profession not connected with philology. I have a lot of ideas and possibilities for the future.’

‘Apart from university, I continued with my pyrotechnic studies. I went to the ‘Autodafe’ school all year, taking time out for examinations. I also got into role-playing games in Moscow. During the year I participated in a Quidditch Championship. (Quidditch is the game from ‘Harry Potter’, and role-players invented the rules to play Quidditch on the ground).’

‘During the longer holidays I visited Kitezh. We also organised two students' groups in May to come and see Kitezh, and I brought some of my group mates and a girl from the ‘Autodafe’ school.’

Valentina is studying Slavonic language and literature, and specialises in English language and literature. She is a talented poet and writer, and enjoys playing the guitar and singing.



Photo: Liza Hollingshead

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

This year's Annual Conference will take place on 21 November in the conference suite at BEARR's new premises at CAN-Mezzanine, 32-36 Loman Street, London SE1 0EE, 5 minutes' walk from Southwark Underground station.

The theme has been chosen in the light of discussions at the 9 May Conference and comments made in the evaluation forms. In particular, participants were concerned that we should devote more attention to countries other than Russia, especially Ukraine (a vocal lobby for some years) and Central Asia (an area of increasing interest), and thought a comparative approach would shed useful light on the topic and perhaps suggest solutions which could be applied to other countries. Disability is the main focus for many in BEARR's network, so we hope the conference will be of very wide interest.

Keynote speakers at the conference, presenting a broad historical and sociological background, and a review of current law and policy, will be Dr Elena larskaia-Smirnova and Michael Rasell.

Dr larskaia-Smirnova, who is Editor of the *Journal of Social and Political Studies* and Professor at Saratov State Polytechnic University, is a leading Russian academic with practical experience in this area. Michael Rasell, of the Centre for Russian and East European Studies at Birmingham University, is doing long-term research on the position of people with physical disabilities in Russia, with field-work conducted in Kazan.

The conference will have separate sessions on the three regions covered, with speakers from NGOs in those regions – NGO organisers, parents, and disabled people themselves. The conference will look at how attitudes to disability are changing (if they are) in the various countries, and what NGOs and the third sector can do to promote change. A range of disabilities will be covered.

Further information will be posted on our website, www.bearr.org, as it becomes available. If you would like to feed in suggestions or nominate speakers, please email info@bearr.org.

The BEARR Trust Annual Lecture 2008 'Culture and Society in Post-Communist Russia'

BEARR is delighted to have secured for this year's Annual Lecture Dr Ekaterina Genieva OBE

Dr Genieva is Director-General of the Russian State Library for Foreign Literature and a major player on the Russian socio-cultural scene. She was appointed to her current position following the collapse of the Soviet Union after a distinguished career as a literature specialist at the Library. She has, for example, written extensively on writers such as Thackeray, Dickens and Waugh. Her appointment as Director-General of the Library catapulted her to the heart of Russian cultural life, and she has remained an important and outspoken figure over the subsequent years.

Dr Genieva's lecture will be a landmark of the year for all those with an interest in how Russia has been developing since the collapse of Communism, and how it is likely to develop in future. It will provide highly relevant background for all those trying to work with Russian partners in an increasingly difficult socio-political environment.



The lecture will take place at Pushkin House in Bloomsbury, London, at 6.30pm on 23 October 2008. It will be followed by drinks and canapés for all participants, and a chance to see the latest art exhibition at Pushkin House.

The Annual Lecture is BEARR's chief fund-raising event of the year. Please come and bring along your family, friends and contacts for what is sure to be a most enjoyable and stimulating evening.

Further details will appear on the website, and be sent personally to those on BEARR's mailing list. To be put on the mailing list, please email info@bearr.org.

Calling young volunteers!

To find ways to channel your enthusiasm for the wider world – its people and geography – can be difficult when you're young, unqualified and on a budget. This may all change thanks to a new EU programme called 'Youth in Action'. Launched at the beginning of 2007, the programme aims to help young people between 13 and 30 get involved in exchanges, initiatives and volunteer programmes across the EU and further afield, including Russia and the Caucasus region. There are two main branches of the programme: the European Voluntary Service, and Youth for Europe.

The *European Voluntary Service* (EVS) is an excellent scheme for any young person hoping to find a long-term (between 6 and 12 months) volunteer placement with an NGO within or outside the EU. You may have a particular interest in refugees, or health, or perhaps environmental awareness. The requirement for participation is that you outline your aims for supporting the host organisation: perhaps this may be a scheme to help educate young people about the risk of AIDS, or anything related to social, cultural, environmental, community or youth work. From a database of host organisations, you can search for an NGO that suits your interest. Then you must find a sending organisation from your home country who will support your application. All sending and host organisations can be found in the programme's database of accredited organisations.

The programme will cover your travel costs, insurance, and a weekly stipend to cover your living expenses. Plus, you will receive a mentor, language lessons, training and evaluation sessions to help you get the most from your experience. Selection is not made on the skills of the volunteer – the programme aims to make volunteering available to all.

Although they are outside the EU, Russia and the Caucasus region are included in the programme, though finding a host organisation is sometimes a little trickier. To mention but two examples, volunteers have worked recently (but before the current crisis in South Ossetia) in Georgia supporting refugees, and on Lake Baikal as part of an environmental awareness scheme.

The partnership benefits both the volunteer and the host organisation, and it would be excellent to see more NGOs in the region willing to act as host organisations and improve the exchange of ideas and experiences. Young people can offer NGOs their language skills (proof-reading, translation etc.), new perspectives, and unlimited time and enthusiasm.

To find out more on the possibilities for volunteering in Russia and the Caucasus region – both for young people and for NGOs – visit www.salto-youth.net/trgeeca. They provide a forum for host organisations who are seeking volunteers. There is also a list of contacts: people ready to promote and to inform others about the Youth in Action programme in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus. This is great for NGOs in the region wanting to find out more about what's involved.

Youth in Action's other scheme, *Youth for Europe*, supports exchanges and youth initiatives and encourages young people's participation in democratic life. I recently participated in a study visit as part of Youth for Europe. In September 2007, a group of young environmentalists from across Europe travelled to Georgia in order to exchange ideas, gain contacts, and learn more about environmental issues. The trip was organised by two environmental NGOs: Look East, a British organisation, and Greenway, based in Tbilisi.

One of the main aims was to establish links and possible future

by *Candice Sly*,
BEARR Volunteer



Members of Greenway

collaborations between Georgian NGOs and the NGOs represented by the young participants. Besides this, the trip offered a great chance to make friends, learn about Georgia's rich culture and traditions, and enjoy the great, waist-stretching cuisine and the delicious wine! The trip involved several excursions, including one to the spectacular Borjomi-Kharagauli national park, and another to an organic farm in the wine-growing region of Khakheti.

Both schemes offer great opportunities for partnership between East and West and an excellent chance for young people to pursue their interests without breaking the bank!

CONTACT

For general information on both programmes, visit: http://ec.europa.eu/youth/yia/index_en.html

Handover of Chairmanship at BEARR

It came as a shock to BEARR's other Trustees when Michael McCulloch indicated in 2007 that he wished to resign as Chairman, in due course, to devote more time to his local charitable and other activities following a move to the Cotswolds.

Following a lengthy search, Tony Longrigg agreed to become a Trustee of BEARR with a view to taking over as Chairman after six months or so if he and the other Trustees agreed that they would suit each other and our wider purposes. Tony's election as a Trustee was duly reported in the last issue of the Newsletter (page 14).

Tony became increasingly interested in our work throughout this period, and it was agreed with enthusiasm all round that he should take over from Michael McCulloch in May this year. Michael is kindly remaining a Trustee for a few months to tie up various bits of unfinished business.

The Trustees are delighted to have Tony as their new Chairman, but sad to see Michael go after a lengthy and at times fraught period at the helm following the death of his predecessor Sir Norman Wooding. Michael was asked if he would give us his parting thoughts on leaving BEARR.



Looking back by Michael McCulloch

On 28 May I handed over to Tony Longrigg as Chairman of the BEARR Trust. When your Editor invited me to contribute a valedictory Newsletter article, my first thoughts were that five years is a long time and one's memory can play tricks! I decided to research my archives, and to attempt a factual comparison of Then and Now.

The archives yielded an email of 23 February 2003, in which I set out an informal 'prospectus' for my fellow Trustees:

'...BEARR's evolution faces two major challenges. ... The first, clearly, is financial: in the short term to close ... the substantial gap between income and expenditure in the 2003 budget. And in the (not much) longer term we should try to put our finances on a more secure footing. Our second challenge ... is to complete the task of articulating, and then carrying into our activities, a renewed sense of BEARR's role and comparative advantage.'

I had no ready-made answers. Rather, I foresaw searching questions and hard choices!

How have we done? The table below tells part of the story:

	2002	2007
Income	£152,711	£42,695
Expenditure	£153,251	£32,441
Surplus/deficit on unrestricted funds	-£6,304	£3,060
Free reserves	-£2,448	£22,587
Projects/value	7/£88,117	3/£14,056
Staff full/part time	1/3	0/1

BEARR now receives and spends less and has fewer projects, but is on a sounder, though not fully sustainable, footing.

Stronger finances without worthwhile purpose and activities mean little. During 2003-04, alongside some indeed difficult financial choices, we looked at BEARR's options for the future. Nothing was excluded, even winding ourselves up! We recognised that both region and

funding environment had changed, fundamentally. SWOT analysis, thinkpieces and strategy papers all prompted hard reflection and long discussion.

Out of this process came first some interim solutions – closer cooperation with another charity, Allavida, and an effort, unsuccessful, to devise a new, low-cost, means of bidding for the limited project grants still on offer.

Interim steps, yes, but they proved to be stepping stones to the redefined mission and objectives we adopted in 2005, now displayed on our website and the back cover of this Newsletter.

These priorities have served BEARR better than we could have imagined. Deciding to provide seed funding for other organisations seemed an ambitious aspiration at the time, but it prepared us to respond to the funding interest of the Moscow Office of the US law firm, Baker Botts, and so to support homelessness projects and to invigorate the Small Grant Scheme, now in its third year. Likewise, we could not have expected, but were ready for, the opportunity to put

Sponsor a BEARR Trustee

Nicola Ramsden, a long-standing BEARR Trustee, is taking part in the Sprint Triathlon to be held on 21 September in St Albans, in the 50+ age category (of people who still have their own knees, as Nicola puts it).

This event is not for wimps. Participants have to swim 400m, cycle 20km, and then run 5km. While each of these is well within Nicola's capacity (she is, among other things, a trained skiing instructor) with a rest day or two between them, it is rather different to do them one after the other, against the clock. This is the first time Nicola has ever tried anything like this. She is rather enjoying the training but making no commitments about whether she will repeat the experience! Still it makes a change from her former life as an investment banker, and she is enjoying having a less sedentary life these days.

The event is organised by Hope and Homes for Children, who will use part of the funds raised to close four institutions in Romania and move over 300 children into family-based care. Nicola will give part of the sponsorship she raises to Hope and Homes, and the rest to BEARR.

Nicola proposes to set up a page under her name on Justgiving, but would prefer people to email her (nicola.ramsden@virgin.net) so that she can send them a sponsorship and gift aid form – and that way, be certain of knowing who to thank!



Looking back *continued*

together the CEELBAS/BEARR NGO Development Programme, launched recently with a lively conference at the excellent CAN Mezzanine facilities where we now lease office space.

These achievements and others – the website, a flourishing Annual Lecture series and Conference, active fundraising – owe everything to the cooperative efforts of a dedicated core of necessarily hands-on Trustees, our office helpers, volunteers, Friends, partners, and donors. It has been a privilege to know and work with you, and I wish you every success for the future!

Jobs for disabled people in Moscow

A US firm in Moscow would like to employ disabled Russian staff in jobs for which they are suited, e.g. receptionist, driver, translator, secretary, interpreter. They have been unable to find such staff.

Does anyone know of any agency looking for jobs for disabled people? If so, please contact info@bearr.org.

Premises for small charities

BEARR is now happily ensconced at CAN-Mezzanine in Loman Street, Southwark, a new development of office space for small charities, run as a not-for-profit enterprise. We have available all the facilities of a large modern office, including an impressive conference suite.

There are still a few spaces left at CAN-Mezzanine, and a new (third) branch is to open shortly in Old Street.

If you are interested in renting one or more desk spaces at either venue, please contact:

Pete Murray on 020 7922 7701
email p.murray@can-online.org.uk
or visit www.can-online.org.uk

Dates for your diary

23 October 2008, 6.30, Pushkin House
The BEARR Trust Annual Lecture
'Culture and Society in Post-Communist Russia'
by Dr Ekaterina Genieva, OBE. (See page 12 for details)

21 November 2008, CAN-Mezzanine, Southwark
The BEARR Trust Annual Conference
'Changing Attitudes to Disability in Russia, Ukraine and Central Asia' (See page 12 for details)

The BEARR Trust contact details:

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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, Lady Hurd, 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, Stephen Dalziel, Yuri Goligorsky, Daryl Hardman, Marcia Levy, Ann Lewis CMG, Tony Longrigg CMG (Chairman), Michael McCulloch, Sarah Philips MBE, Nicola Ramsden

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Newsletter: Editor: Ann Lewis; layout: Leila Carlyle

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

Please fill in the form and post it with your cheque to the BEARR office. Please make cheques payable to The BEARR Trust. Or better still, subscribe annually by banker's order or direct transfer.

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