

The BEARR Trust: Supporting vulnerable people in Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the Caucasus



Mayuboni Tavono, Tajikistan - project helping young people with disabilities gain professional skills

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# The BEARR Trust Small Grants Scheme 2019: Outcome

## The BEARR Small Grants Scheme 2019 invited bids for grants for projects dealing with violence against women and girls.

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

The Trust received a large number of applications for grants this year, showing the urgent need in the area chosen. 213 applications were received altogether, from Armenia (4), Azerbaijan (3), Belarus (15), Georgia (7), Kazakhstan (10), Kyrgyzstan (19), Moldova (2), Russia (37), Tajikistan (33), Turkmenistan (1), Ukraine (74), Uzbekistan (3), UK(4), France (1).

## Grants were offered as follows:

**Kitez, Moscow, Russia**, to build a network of shelters for women in Moscow and Moscow region, using networked IT to ensure women are not turned away unnecessarily.

**Women's League of Donechchyna, Mariupol, Ukraine**, to strengthen the ability of employees of the crisis centre and mobile brigades to prevent and counter violence by preventing professional burnout and improving counselling skills.

**League of Polish Women, Chisinau, Moldova**, to develop Playback Theatre as an instrument for the rehabilitation of victims of violence, by training actors in Playback techniques.

**Winds of Change, Odessa, Ukraine**, to expand economic rights and opportunities for IDP victims of gender-based violence, with workshops, counselling, establishment of self-help groups and a booklet on financial security.

**Tolerspace, Kyiv, Ukraine**, to create a graphic novel for 12–16 year old girls, and training of peer guides in interactive use of this to raise awareness of violence.

**Olive Branch Arts, Armenia/UK**, for 'The Freedom Project', a therapeutic project for women survivors of violence to explore their experiences through photography, leading to a photographic exhibition.

**Improve Our Village NGO, Argel, Armenia**, for 'Women's Rights Kitchen', a project to help protect and empower Yazidi women victims by developing culinary and other skills.

**Union Women's Centre, Tbilisi, Georgia**, to develop strategies to resist child marriage in ethnic minority communities in Georgia and Azerbaijan, including training for doctors in the complications of early pregnancy.

**Harmony Plus, Karakol, Kyrgyzstan**, for workshops on domestic violence for young mothers and mothers-in-law, a workshop for NGO and other professionals and a round table for officials including law enforcement.

**Crisis Centre Sezim, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan**, for 'New Beginnings', a project to establish club meetings for women of 55+, with legal services, counselling, art therapy, computer literacy etc.

**Chance Crisis Centre, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan**, for assessing the quality of services for victims of gender-based violence; training and testing of assessment tools; research on 5-7 crisis centres and their services, taking into account the interests of different categories of victims.

**Parastor, Dushanbe, Tajikistan**, to open a rapid response centre in Dushanbe to assist victims of violence, plus training for NGO and crisis centre staff, police, judges and doctors.

**Bereginya, Petrozavodsk, Russia**, for self-defence and psychological workshops, and a photo session to increase self-esteem among 25 victims of violence living in a crisis centre.

**Women's Initiatives, Blijniy, Moldova**, for group and individual counselling by a psychologist and a lawyer for women and their children; training and master classes; developing and issuing legal and psychological guidelines on the theme 'Your family is not a place for fear, violence and cruel treatment'.

**Ulica Mira, St Petersburg, Russia**, to deliver psychological help to women who have experienced intimate partner violence (IPV) and to children who have witnessed IPV. This project will be jointly funded by Help Impact, (<https://helpimpact.org>). Help Impact helps disadvantaged young people anywhere in the world.

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

The Small Grants Scheme 2019 is funded by donations from Just Trust, Network for Social Change Charitable Trust, sponsorship from Charlie Walker's marathon (see page 15), individual BEARR supporters and a grant from a private foundation. We are most grateful to all these generous donors.

# Combating Human Trafficking in Transnistria

Oxana Alistratova, NGO Interaction, Tiraspol, Transnistria, Moldova

**According to the 2018 US Trafficking in Persons Report, the Republic of Moldova falls short in effectively combatting trafficking, in large part due to government corruption, making NGO involvement all the more important.**

The government identified 364 victims of trafficking in 2018, compared with 249 in 2017. Of these identified victims, 60 were children, an increase from 48 in 2017. Victims of trafficking receive little if any help. Related issues include: victims in rural areas not being reached, lack of legal representation for financial reasons, and few professionals offering victims pro bono services. Some law enforcement officials may have deliberately avoided identifying victims and investigating trafficking. The border police do not consistently screen undocumented migrants for trafficking before placing them in detention facilities.

Several international, regional and local NGOs are active in Moldova in combating trafficking in human beings in cooperation with government bodies. In 2007 the International Organisation for Migration (IOM) started to establish a national referral system in conjunction with the Ministry for Social Protection and other government bodies, covering some districts but not the whole territory of Moldova. Many small villages are not covered, so at-risk people and victims in these areas are not aware that they can get protection and have their cases prosecuted. There are no regular preventative activities. A change of approach is needed, with new rules of communication and cooperation.

Since the armed conflict in the breakaway region of Transnistria in 1990, it has been politically isolated. The laws of the Republic of Moldova have not extended to Transnistria's social and political life for more than 27 years. The Transnistrian authorities have their own government structures, currency, army, and also telephone system. Much of its legal system follows Russian lines.

**Population outflow is a constant process and the population shrinks every year. Many children and elderly people are left behind without care and protection.**

So far no official Transnistrian research papers have been published identifying trends in migration and crimes associated with human trafficking in Transnistria.

The problem of illegal migration and trafficking was identified much earlier in the rest of Moldova than in Transnistria, but large-scale information campaigns in Moldova about the risks involved did not cover this region until 2004. The first work with victims of human trafficking in Transnistria was initiated in 2003 by the NGO Interaction, which defends human rights, family rights and children's rights in the socio-economic and cultural spheres, in joint action with the NGO La Strada, the International Centre for the Protection and Promotion of Women's Rights. Together we worked for the reintegration of victims and ran a series of information seminars in educational institutions in Transnistria.

On the basis of the information revealed during the information seminars, Interaction approached the IOM with a proposal to

develop a special project on the social reintegration of victims in Transnistria and to inform the population about the risks of illegal migration and human trafficking. The IOM supported the idea, and work began in 2004 on the reintegration of victims.

**A large-scale information campaign started in 2006 with the establishment of the Hotline 080088888 to combat human trafficking and illegal migration in Transnistria.**

Work with the victims revealed a direct link between trafficking in persons and domestic violence. Interaction and other NGOs, the IOM and other international actors periodically analyse the cases of trafficked women and have identified that domestic violence is one of main push factors. So Helpline 080099800 dealing with issues of domestic violence was launched in 2009, together with an information campaign also extended to Transnistria.

Interaction has elaborated its own comprehensive approach to the prevention of human trafficking in Transnistria. It has five components:

- Information campaign targeted at the prevention of trafficking and domestic violence
- Consultations and assistance for victims (actual or potential) of trafficking in human beings through Hotline 080088888.
- Consultations and assistance for victims (actual or potential) of domestic violence through Trustline 080099800.
- Identification of SOS cases, provision of direct emergency assistance to victims of human trafficking and domestic violence
- Instituting and applying a multidisciplinary approach that presumes the involvement of state and non-government organisations.

The Hotline 080088888 for the prevention of trafficking in human beings in Transnistria has in the past 13 years received more than 15,700 calls, more than 26% of them regarding SOS cases of victims of trafficking or people at risk (in the last 5 years – more than 30%). 67% are calls by women, 33% by men.

A call has SOS (emergency) status if the caller:

- is a victim of trafficking either abroad or in-country;
- is a victim of domestic violence living abroad;
- is a migrant facing problems abroad (lost documents, breach of migration legislation in the other country, health problems, homelessness);
- needs repatriation assistance, assistance in the reissue of personal documents, social assistance, etc.

Moldova, including Transnistria, is generally a place of origin and transit territory; in very few cases is it identified as a country of destination. Profile of the victims: men or woman aged 16–55.



ОБЩЕСТВЕННАЯ ОРГАНИЗАЦИЯ  
ВЗАИМОДЕЙСТВИЕ  
INTERACTION

### SOS-cases: countries of destination and gender

**Russia**

**UAE**

**European Union**  
(Poland, Germany, Italy, Czech Republic)

**Turkmenistan**

**Azerbaijan**

**Ukraine**

**Israel**

**Transnistria**



**Sex of victims:**  
Women – 51%  
Men – 49%

**Recruiting:**  
e-resources  
e-networks  
public/street adds.  
neighbours  
employment agencies

mostly less educated and living in rural areas. Children are mostly exploited in-country but are in some cases connected with migration. The types of exploitation differ: labour exploitation, prostitution, begging, servitude or the removal of organs.

Given the proliferation of IT communication channels, the traffickers' crime chain is mostly invisible, and is usually fronted by independent legal bodies or physical persons. Each link in the chain looks like a kind of minor fraud or misuse of power. It is also very difficult to identify organised crime gangs because victims of trafficking may not even be aware of the phenomenon and do not recognise themselves as victims. Moreover, they really do believe that it is their own fault.



The Law 'On Combating Trafficking in Human Beings' was adopted in Transnistria on 23 June 2010. Since 2003 there has been an article on human trafficking in the Transnistrian Criminal Code with a maximum term of imprisonment of 15 years. There is a special provision in the law: preventative actions and assistance to victims may be carried out provided there is a special budget line in the Transnistrian budget - which for 2019 does not actually include any activities aimed at preventing human trafficking and rendering assistance to its victims(!)

Regular progress and statistical reports show that victims of trafficking are unwilling to cooperate with the police because of fear of stigma and ignorance of the moral/financial compensation which may be available as a result of the investigation process. They prefer to remain silent or leave the family. These and the other indications described above suggest there is a need to

increase the effectiveness of the legal framework and institutional arrangements, to contribute to further capacity-building among the relevant professionals and stakeholders engaged in countering trafficking in human beings and domestic violence, and to provide support and specific services to its victims and other individuals concerned.

**Question: how to be effective and remain efficient when the authorities are unconcerned but global trends push us to be more active in protecting victims of trafficking?**

With the support of international actors, Transnistrian NGOs have established an informal referral mechanism for the prevention and protection of victims, and reintegration services for victims of trafficking and domestic violence. The 'protective circle' includes the assistance of psychologists, social workers and lawyers, and in child cases also pedagogues. Specialists from social NGOs regularly attend special training sessions, round tables and conferences to ensure better assistance for victims of trafficking and domestic violence.



The informal prevention and protection mechanism established by the NGOs depends quite heavily on international assistance and may have to cease because the Transnistrian budget does not allocate any funds for these activities. Two more questions: can this mechanism be sustainable, and what needs to be done to keep it alive? And yes, we do hope we have found a way – Interaction, together with more than 25 NGOs and initiative groups from all over Moldova, has established a non-commercial partnership called 'Women. Children. Elderly.' This will work to promote and protect human rights on an inter-generational basis. International solidarity, empowering people and in-county cooperation, is another answer.



**Oxana Alistratova** was one of the speakers at the BEARR/ULIM Conference in Chisinau in April (page 5). She will be speaking on domestic violence at the BEARR Trust Annual Conference in London in November (page 14).

# Moldova Conference: Migration and Social Change in Eastern Europe

Report by Petru Negura, ULIM

**The Conference 'Migration and Social Change in Eastern Europe' took place on 11-12 April 2019 at the Free International University of Moldova (ULIM) in a partnership between The BEARR Trust and ULIM.**

The conference involved about 100 participants, including 33 speakers and moderators. Participants came from Moldova (69) and from the UK, France, Italy, USA, Ukraine, and Spain. The conference examined the impact of migration on the health and social well-being of children, adolescents and older people from different perspectives. The conference also discussed some of the beneficial consequences of migration, such as remittances and the transfer of expertise and know-how through migrants. Thus, experts and conference participants analysed good practices and success stories to encourage working-age people not to migrate. Several speakers emphasised the need to capitalise on the experience of Moldovan migrants for the economic and social development of Moldova.



The purpose of the conference was not only to exchange and disseminate information and expertise on migration. It also set out with the practical aim of improving the capacity of civil society organisations (CSOs) to contribute to addressing issues related to the health and social protection of children, adolescents and older people arising as a result of migration, and to elaborate innovative and effective solutions to prevent the negative effects of migration on the population. This practical dimension of the conference reflects the objectives of The BEARR Trust, a charity that supports vulnerable people in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. The concept of the conference was based on an approach developed over 28 years by BEARR, carried out through annual



conferences in London on aspects of health and social welfare and occasional regional conferences. The partnership between BEARR and ULIM rested on the common assumption of the human values of care and responsibility towards vulnerable people.

Both goals – the dissemination and exchange of information and expertise and the empowerment of NGOs – were achieved, a success fully recognised by most of the conference participants in their evaluation forms.

During the first session of the conference, independent experts, academics and members of the Government presented different perspectives, some holistic, others focused on specific cases and issues, related to migration in Eastern Europe, especially from Moldova. This session was particularly important in drawing out the contours and vectors of migration and in monitoring the evolution of the phenomenon by different categories of migrants. The several case studies looked in depth at problems faced by Moldovan migrants in the Russian Federation and the second generation of Moldovan migrants in Italy. Discussions that concluded this session were particularly important and interesting. Participants were given the opportunity to question experts and members of the Government, in particular the State Secretary for Labour and Demography and the representative of the Office for Diaspora Affairs, on burning issues related to migration.

In the following sessions, thematic workshops were organised specifically for participants working in the public and non-government sectors. On the first day, the workshops focused on four major themes: children, adolescents, the elderly, and the diaspora's role in supporting and developing their communities of origin. The second day of the conference was devoted entirely to workshops on specific aspects of NGO management. This session was particularly successful due to its practical approach, aimed at training and updating the participants' work skills, as noted in the evaluation forms.

Moderated by experienced practitioners, leaders and specialists from recognised NGOs in the field, the workshops gave rise to an exchange of experience and expertise to help organisations work more effectively with users, access material and human resources more efficiently, attract volunteers, collaborate effectively with donors, other civil society organisations, public institutions and the media.

All the workshops had a flexible and interactive format. Participants did not hesitate to ask moderators questions and engage in lively discussion on the themes addressed. Most participants (87%) judged that the workshops achieved their

goal of providing practical knowledge and tools to develop the capacity and work of their NGOs.

In addition to communication sessions and thematic workshops, the conference offered the opportunity of direct communication between participants and donor organisations at a 'donor fair' held on the second day of the conference. This section gave rise to direct and informal communication between conference participants – members and leaders of organisations, academics and students – and representatives of several institutions (philanthropic organisations, international bodies, embassies) traditionally supporting social and especially migration issues.

The conference days began with a brief introduction, a summary of the previous day's activity, and ended with conclusions drawn from the work done during the day. Workshop moderators were invited to summarise key ideas for all participants. After the conference, Nicola Ramsden, Chairman of The BEARR Trust, and Petru Negura, a lecturer at ULIM, invited the conference participants to a discussion on the most important issues discussed at the conference and needing to be addressed in the future.

The participants also urged that their key recommendations be submitted to the Moldovan government, to slow the departure of Moldovans from the country and to ease the situation of Moldovan migrants abroad and their families (especially children and elderly people) remaining in the country.

The evaluation forms completed by the majority of participants showed a positive appreciation of the conference. All participants judged the activities to be useful or very useful. Most of them appreciated especially the practical and formative activities developed in the workshops and seminars.

Most participants also appreciated the conference for the opportunities it offered for communication and mutual enrichment among the participants (many of whom were experts and people actively involved in various projects in the field), academic experts and representatives of donor organisations. Participants also put forward a number of ideas and proposals to improve the work of future conferences. In the end, everyone acknowledged that the conference was a success and provided a significant contribution to the understanding of the phenomenon of migration and the search for viable solutions for addressing migration issues.



BEARR and ULIM are grateful to **Svetlana Haraz** and **Petru Negura** (photo left) for masterminding the organisation of the conference, to Jane Ebel and Nicola Ramsden for playing the leading role at BEARR, and to the team of eager ULIM volunteers (right) who helped throughout.

#### Nicola Ramsden adds:

BEARR's approach to conferences and workshops might have seemed novel to some participants. We don't know exactly how many useful connections were made at the conference, nor how many new ideas or techniques are now being put into practice by people who attended. We hope that the two days will have lasting impact. But we were struck by how strongly many participants felt that the problems they were dealing with had been exacerbated by institutional problems. We heard much criticism, explicit and implicit, of flawed policy-making and lack of political leadership. However, a new government has been formed since the conference took place. It is still in its early stages, and it remains to be seen how much impact it will have on migration policy and migration flows.



The organisers are very grateful to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation for their support for the conference.

## The BEARR Trust Annual Lecture by Bridget Kendall

# Russia and the 'No Rules' World of President Putin

In October 2014, six months after the Russian annexation of Crimea, and a few months after the start of the conflict in the Donbas, Vladimir Putin gave what was described as one of his most important foreign policy speeches to the Valdai conference in Sochi.

Headlined 'The World Order: New rules or a game without rules?', the President talked of a world of increasing disorder and fragmentation – placing the blame clearly on the West's triumphalism and failure to take account of Russian interests. Russia was prepared to be a rational actor, said Putin – but if its interests and status were ignored, the crisis in Ukraine would be a harbinger of things to come.

Putin's attitude to the international 'rules-based system' was the subject of this year's BEARR Trust Annual Lecture on 6 June 2019, hosted once again by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). It is a topic that Bridget Kendall, this year's speaker, is ideally placed to analyse. The BBC's former Diplomatic Correspondent (and a BEARR Patron), Bridget arrived in Moscow in 1989, reporting on the collapse of the Soviet Union. For thirty years, she has been a critical observer of Russia's changing relations with the West, including conducting two long interviews with Vladimir Putin, broadcast live from inside the Kremlin.

Seen in this longer perspective, Putin's speech to the Valdai conference presented an evolution of Russian policy, rather than a new turn. At the Munich Security Conference in 2007, Putin criticised the United States for what he saw as an elitist and confrontational pursuit of Western interests, including through NATO expansion, the Iraq war and the 'colour revolutions' in Georgia and Ukraine. This followed a longer stance of criticism of Western intervention without taking account of Russian interests, going back to the NATO bombing of Serbia in 1999 and subsequent recognition of Kosovo.

The Munich speech emphasised deteriorating international security as a result of Western use of power. Not long afterwards, Russia demonstrated its own use of hard power in the 2008 conflict with Georgia. Three features of Russian action in this short war were also important in the much longer confrontations in Ukraine some years later: first, a direct challenge to a government seen as 'pro-Western' (and therefore potentially threatening to Russian interests); second, intervention to ensure Russian security in the Black Sea; and third, a willingness to take military action in the name of protecting Russian nationals (in this case in Abkhazia and South Ossetia).

Since then, domestic security has become an increasingly important consideration. Protests in Russia in 2011 (at the same time as Western support for regime change at the time of the



Arab spring) prompted renewed concerns at the risk of an internal 'colour revolution' and were used to justify pressure on potential sources of opposition. Intervention in Ukraine in opposition to the (Western-supported) overthrow of the Yanukovich regime reflected concerns about potential contagion to Russia.

### So is Russia operating a 'game without rules'?

Putin's Valdai speech asserted that the 'rules' had been broken by the West in any case, providing a precedent for Russian action in support of its own interests. Actions in Ukraine demonstrate a Russian willingness to use conventional hard power as well as the complex control (or partial control) of local actors in the Donbas to maintain a long-term destabilising influence; more broadly, the sophisticated use of technology in support of disinformation campaigns and disruption to digital infrastructure (for example in Estonia) points to an ability to 'break rules' in new ways that are often opaque and deniable. Nevertheless, the Russian government also sometimes claims to be a mediator and upholder of international order, the role that it describes for itself in respect of Syria.

Russia's use of 'political technology' and defence of its interests in the 'near abroad' have, over most of Putin's time in office, been cast as oppositional to the interests and action of the West. But 'the West' itself has been challenged, as slow median income growth, relative decline in relation to rising powers such as China, and the rise of populism reduce collective confidence in liberal values and multilateral institutions and approaches. This certainly plays to Putin's narrative of Western hubris and subsequent decline.

The long-term outlook for the current Russian regime is challenging however. Vladimir Putin cannot go on forever, but there is no obvious succession strategy and no clear route for the president to exit with security. The President therefore has to keep control until he is either forced out or can effect some form of transition. This presents inherent risks, since while

the government currently appears stable and opposition is apparently contained, Bridget Kendall refers to 'a sense of fin de siècle': while there is a popular aversion to the risks of change, this is not the same as genuine and enthusiastic support for the regime, and successions are hard to control.

Looking to the future, perhaps there are grounds for optimism. 'Western values' may be open to challenge – but openness to challenge is a basis for resilience and diversity. The end of communism was associated with a desire to live in a rules-based, open society (even if it didn't quite work out

that way): that aspiration is still there, and potentially rising as increasing incomes (among some sections of the population) come up against a restrictive political system. In the meantime, remembering that 'the state' is not the same thing as 'the people' is important – demonstrating the value of the non-political, people-to-people contact that is the focus of BEARR's work.

The BEARR Trust is, as ever, grateful to the EBRD for hosting and supporting this lecture.

Report by Ross Gill, BEARR Trustee

## Small Grants Scheme project reports

# Self-belief is the Chief Result

## Grantee: Aratta, Chernihiv, Ukraine

**Project: 'Productive Life', to empower and provide marketable skills to young people with physical and mental disabilities.**

Aratta organised training courses for people with disabilities in areas such as computer literacy, English language, hairdressing and manicure.

At the same time, an educational programme covered human rights, the labour rights of people with disabilities, and existing job vacancies.

To attract public attention and find points of interaction with employers, we held a round table discussion with the Regional Department of Social Protection, Syaivo Sivershchyna Business Union, Chernihiv City Employment Centre, the

Centre for Legal Aid, the Regional Youth Centre and journalists.

We also initiated a 'Week on the Employment of Disabled People', run by the City Employment Centre. Project participants were invited to a round table and a job fair. Radio and TV, social networks and media publications carried information about the project's goals and activities.

We have had to overcome a long-held belief among disabled people and their parents that they shouldn't work: the state should provide for them. Many thought that if they started to work they would lose their state benefits - so we invited psychologists and successful people with disabilities to show how life can improve if they develop their skills and get a good salary rather than modest benefits. We brought in lawyers to explain employment law.

It is also not easy to overcome society's prejudice that disabled people are somehow wrong and should be isolated (as in Soviet times). Some citizens expressed open hostility – so we showed off the talents of our art therapy group in exhibitions and in performances by our Rehabilitation Theatre Dyvosad during town events. And audiences greeted them very warmly.

During the project we organised a 2-week camp near the Blue Lakes and it was a challenge to continue the training course – so we arranged for teachers to visit the camp, bringing materials, adjusting teaching methods, and continuing the programme successfully using a laptop for the computer classes.

One positive result is long-term cooperation with Chernihiv City Employment Centre. Now Aratta receives information monthly about vacancies for people with disabilities. We also started

**Natasha Skepska** is 29 and has used a wheelchair for 9 years. From time to time her health becomes worse and she needs support. Natasha was an active participant in our programme from the start. For her it was a great opportunity to study - she couldn't visit other establishments because of poor accessibility and transport. She came to all our activities as we organised transportation to classes, rehearsals and performances.

We can see really good results in Natasha's life. She did well in English and Computer Studies, became skilled in hairdressing, and has happily become not

only an actor but also a hairdresser at the Youth Integration Studio Theatre.

**Zhenya Sopun** is 25 and disabled. He was not a happy man, feeling betrayed by his mother twice – she left him at an orphanage when he was just born, and when he finally found her she did not want to talk to him or participate in his life.

Zhenya came to Chernihiv after an unsuccessful attempt to study at a Pedagogical University. He failed as it was not easy for a severely handicapped, lonely young man to cope, materially and intellectually.

Zhenya was invited to Aratta's day care centre and onto our Productive Life project. He studied English and IT. At the camp he was happy to participate in lessons, workshops and performances. Every day he felt more inspired and was really happy to get a job as DJ at the discos. His job was very successful and he was well paid all summer! At the start of the next academic year he went to study at the All-Ukrainian Centre for Complex Rehabilitation for People with Disabilities in the village of Lyutyzh in the Kyiv region. Now he is very happy, fulfilled, and just married!



cooperation with other NGOs working for handicapped children, joining our voices.

Another positive result: our clients loved to study. They were very diligent students and would like to continue to improve their skills. Many parents were inspired seeing that their children can have a good future, so this improved the atmosphere in their families and in society.

We hope that the participants will be able to find a job, since many young people leave Ukraine for better salaries, so there are more job vacancies. Also, according to the law every company should employ a special 4% quota of people with disabilities.

We would like to thank the BEARR Trust team for believing in our project and giving us an opportunity to improve the quality

of life of many people in Chernihiv. We felt comfortable and inspired while carrying out the project and hope to continue our cooperation!

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## Self-fulfilment Through Work

### Grantee: ZtRASS, Zhytomyr Regional Association of Social Professionals

#### Project: 'Through Innovation to Equal Opportunities'

The demand for labour has fallen significantly in the recent years of socio-economic crisis in Ukraine, which has led to an increase in the number of young people out of work, a social group already less competitive in the labour market than other sections of the population.

People with disabilities have found themselves even worse off. Although the law provides a number of safeguards aimed at providing employment for young people with special needs, many employers deliberately avoid employing them.

To achieve human development goals in Ukraine, and to solve many other problems, we need to make it possible for young people with disabilities to lead a fully integrated social life, especially since the proportion of people with disabilities in the overall population is constantly growing.

The employment of people with disabilities in industrial work is a weak point in the Ukrainian system of social protection. One way to solve this problem is to educate young people with special needs informally in the process of self-employment and various forms of small business. Ukraine's civic organisations have been taking on this responsibility.

Hence the project 'Through Innovation to Equal Opportunities' run by the Zhytomyr Regional Association of Social Professionals in various vocational schools in the Zhytomyr region.

First, the project developed and tested a new model of informal self-employment training for young people with disabilities. Graduates of specialised training courses for young people with intellectual disabilities at the Zhytomyr Higher Boarding School and the Berdichevsky Specialised Education Institution – were able to develop the skills required for self-employment or running a small business.

Second, we were able to compile and publish a handbook entitled 'A new look at the problem of self-employment for young people with disabilities', which was approved by the Department of Social Technologies of Zhytomyr's Ivan Franko University in October 2019. This is recommended for use by all vocational schools in the Zhytomyr region, by social services centres for families, children and young people, and also by community services working with young people of employable age with learning difficulties.

In addition, cooperation agreements were signed with the official Zhytomyr Region Educational and Methodical Cabinet for Vocational Education and the Centre for Social Services for Families, Children and Youth. Such partnerships will ensure the dissemination of these techniques among other similar educational institutions.

Among its many successes, the main achievement of the project was that the best participants in the training took their first steps towards organising their

own businesses. At Berdichev Special General Education Boarding School, young people involved in the programme eagerly developed business ideas for self-employment despite traditional barriers to employment for disabled people. Most young disabled people would like to work and have some ideas about what profession they would like to pursue, but the special education system in Ukraine puts certain restrictions on their ability to do it. It is self-employment that gives hope to this category of young people that they can achieve their professional dream and have a decent life.

**One success story: orchids and an orphanage boy called Dmitry. What might they have in common? Caring for these beautiful flowers at school became something much greater for Dmitry - a dream of having his own business growing these exquisite flowers for the market. In the framework of our project, this young man made a detailed study of how to grow orchids, developed a business plan, and enrolled in training to becoming a florist.**

This project has shown the feasibility of introducing similar employment models into work experience for many young people; not only those in special educational institutions, but also in inclusive classes in state schools and even higher education institutions.

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# My Route to an Occupation

## Grantee: Friends' House, Moscow

**Project: to assist young people with disabilities in Dzerzhinsk to choose an occupation and prepare for their work.**

Dzerzhinsk is 245 miles east of Moscow. The project took place in the autumn of 2018. Fifteen people aged 16-30 received help with social adaptation, psychological and emotional issues and preparing for employment. Thirty-six students aged 16-18 from the special needs group at Dzerzhinsk Technical College also participated. The diagnoses of the participants included autism, kidney pathology, cerebral palsy, epilepsy, schizophrenia, congenital malformations, and problems with hearing and vision including post-oncology issues.

The project was carried out by psychologists from the Centre for Psychological, Pedagogical, Medical and Social Assistance. In individual consultations and group activities the students were able to increase their motivation for work, reduce their feelings of dependence, and develop job-seeking skills, taking into account their health conditions. The 20-30 year olds were resistant to group meetings and wanted individual psychological help

Three participants told us their stories.

Nikita G, aged 18 (autistic spectrum with delayed psychological development)

After diagnosis as a child, Nikita's mother put everything into helping him adapt to life. She was especially worried

about her son's future. She happily agreed to participate in the project saying 'It has always been terrifying for me to think of what will happen to my son when he grows up. .... At 5 years old it became evident that his peers were rejecting him, which hurt and upset him.'

Nikita was training as a painter-plasterer, simply because it was the required placement for people with disabilities, but would probably not get work in this occupation as it did not engage him. Now Nikita is receiving individual tuition, and his family hope this will lead to a better education. During individual work Nikita actively engaged with the psychologist even though this is not a natural inclination for people with autism. He also enjoyed attending group sessions, in some with sufficient enthusiasm, given his diagnosis, to engage with other students. He particularly enjoyed the sand art, which served to lower emotional tension and helped him handle negative feelings.

Nikita's mother received individual psychological help with her anxiety. The plan is for Nikita to do remote work on the internet, perhaps as a programmer, under supervision and with support from his parents. Work with the family continues.

Olga T, aged 30. (Disabled from childhood with hearing loss, she has hearing aids and is able to lip-read.) Olga

had previously worked as a shop assistant, and for the past month had been a clothing machinist, which she did not like because of the work-load and monotony. Being in a group was hard for her as people ignored her because of her hearing problems, but she wanted to be sociable, to help other people. She was border-line depressed. Working with the psychologist brought major changes. Olga aims to write a blog, telling people, using sign language, about books she has read and which helped her. Olga explained that deaf people think in images, and often read little; consequently they can understand text only if accompanied by sign language. She found this applied to the internet as well: she often explained to her peers a theme or texts given by the teacher. She wants to be that kind of guide, helping deaf people to live and to find answers to vital questions. This is a big breakthrough for Olga. Work with her continues.

Oksana B, aged 18 (born with two club feet) had been in a special needs class but was transferred to individual education. Oksana turned in on herself, lost interest in any activities or contact with friends.

During individual sessions she complained about feelings of fatigue and weakness faced with her difficulties: a build-up of tension would result in outbursts of anger. She learnt acceptable ways to express negative feelings. After the exercises 'Go away fury!', 'Bag of fears' and 'I let go of insults' she showed self-confidence, increased self-esteem, and improved mood. Training in relaxation and self-control enabled her to feel free from muscular tension.



In group sessions Oksana expressed her hopes and fears. She came to the Centre independently and faced the difficulty of moving around the Centre. She resumed education with her peers and at one of the school's festive evenings she even joined in with a musical item. Oksana's parents also greatly appreciate the information bank produced by the project.

## Contact

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## We Did It!

### Grantee: KEDEM, Chisinau, Moldova

#### Project: 'Find yourself', a project for the employment of disabled people.

In 2018, our Republic Volunteer Centre (RVC) implemented an important project called 'Find Yourself' in the field of the employment of disabled people, in cooperation with the BEARR Trust. Thanks to the BEARR grant, we were able to gather a group of 40 participants and organised a retreat where people with disabilities could find out about job opportunities for them in Moldova. In addition, the participants, together with specialist volunteers, created a brochure that includes possible employment options for disabled people. There were also activities related to office work and dedicated to the International Day of Persons with Disabilities.



The project participants were divided into two groups. The first group was engaged in compiling the brochure: they called various companies and enterprises asking about possible job offers, looking for the necessary information. And the

second group went to the Rehabilitation Centre for creative workshops.

This topic really matters for us, as we understand the need for such events and for assistance to people with disabilities. Such projects are important because, thanks to them, people with disabilities can gain an income and development opportunities, while it helps society to start to reconsider their views and to change attitudes. We are sincerely glad to develop such projects, and are grateful for BEARR's help.

The workshop trainer, **Elina Groisman**, shared her experience of conducting training sessions and developing the project:

'In my opinion, the project was more than successful. We are pleased that its members responded sincerely to the help they were offered, and gave the project a piece of their soul. We did a lot of work: we collected and processed information, our team together with all the project participants gained the necessary knowledge to compose a CV, we conducted various workshops in which we learned the best way to speak

on the phone to employers, and much more.

But our main achievement was, of course, the creation of the brochure on employment opportunities. In the future, this brochure will not only help the participants in the seminar, but will be distributed to special centres where other people will also be able to study the information provided. I am also grateful that I was able to be a part of this project and to help develop it, so that in future it can help people with disabilities to find a job'.

## Contact

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Photo: Nikolai Railean / Elina Groisman

# Towards Employment for Young People with Down Syndrome

**Grantee: Public Organisation of Parents of Children with Down Syndrome and other Developmental Disorders, Lutsk, Ukraine**

## **Project: Providing social and workplace support for people with Down Syndrome**

Vocational training and the employment of people with disabilities is one of the most painful problems in Ukraine. Young school-leavers with intellectual disabilities have no opportunity to continue their studies and find a job, remaining isolated at home.

No-one deals with the employment of people with Down syndrome except NGOs such as Down Syndrome (Kyiv) and Emmaus (Lviv) and some parents who themselves try to find suitable jobs for their children. The right to work guaranteed by the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is violated.

In Lutsk we have a unique example of a young man with Down Syndrome: Bohdan Kravchuk, the first student in Ukraine to graduate from university. The head of the regional state administration helped him get a job as a museum guide. Bogdan also participated in our project's workshops for young persons with Down Syndrome. But Bogdan is the exception to the rule.

Employers are reluctant to hire people with Down Syndrome. Ukraine lags far behind Europe, where people with Down Syndrome graduate from colleges, get driving licences and work in various fields. Psychologists explain that employment is important for people with Down Syndrome as a higher form of social adaptation.

Our BEARR-supported project became a good example for others of how to enable people with intellectual disabilities to work. 15 young people with Down Syndrome

received skills training and employment assistance.

The project required well-thought-out decision-making, much work, and training not only for the project team but for the young people themselves, their parents, and potential employers, who are an important component of our project. The training courses were run by experienced specialists from Emmaus, which already had a successful record in this field.

During the training sessions 15 young people with Down Syndrome were taught how to cooperate and maintain work discipline, covering punctuality, the ability to report absences, respond to and keep contact with the coach, to follow recommendations, commitments and contracts, and to perform their duties conscientiously. The candidates were taught to look after their appearance (personal hygiene, clothing, hairstyle), how to get around outside the home, how to get to work, how to plan and solve problems outside the home.

Parental support is also extremely important. So 30 parents discussed with the experts common issues related to their children's participation in the employment project. They were taught to accept their children's disabilities and handle their manipulation, motivation, sexuality and independent adulthood. There was also a workshop for employers, to explain the characteristics of people with Down Syndrome, their capabilities and ability to undertake certain professions.

Our project partner, Lutsk City Employment Center, conducted computer diagnostics of the project participants, assessing their work tempo, attentiveness, level of self-control, memory, understanding of tasks and so on.

The Employment Center also got potential employers to take part in workshops. They later organised visits to and internships in their enterprises.

The young participants learned the skills relevant to the food and grocery sector, hotel business, bread production, entertainment centres and photography during their study visits and internships.

The social worker and job trainer ran classes in making souvenirs, sweets, coffee and pizza, and setting tables. There were internships in cafes, hotels, shops and bakeries.

A key part of the project was to find a job for at least two participants. It was not easy and we faced two huge challenges: parents were afraid of losing their carer's allowance, or didn't want their adult son or daughter to get a job as they doubted their ability to work because they lacked skills and were not independent in everyday life. But the biggest challenge was that most



employers are not familiar with people with Down Syndrome and are afraid to employ them.

**We managed to get one young man a part-time job in a shop under the supervision of a social worker.**

**Another participant graduated from vocational school as a photographer. He had an internship in one of our town's photo salons. He is currently working as a freelance photographer in our organisation.**

This project was very important for our organisation, for Lutsk and for Ukraine, because in Ukraine it is not so common practice for people with an intellectual disability to work. We were able to do this thanks to BEARR's support. Young people

with Down Syndrome took part in training courses, study visits and master classes. They socialised and learned many useful skills, especially professional ones. Two young men started work. It was a very new experience for our town. For people with disabilities work is an opportunity to find themselves and be socially useful. As part of the team, they get a new quality of life filled with meaning.

Employers met people with an intellectual disability, and two of them agreed to provide a part-time job with flexible hours. We now understand that employment for people with Down Syndrome requires a set of activities

involving employers, employees and their families.

Cooperation was established with Emmaus (Lviv) and Down Syndrome (Kyiv), a good example for other NGOs from Lutsk and other regions of Ukraine in how to bring out the employability of people with an intellectual disability.

Our parents' dream is to open a 'Sunny Café' where young people with Down Syndrome could work.

Very few donors support programmes for people with disabilities, and especially their employment. So we are very grateful to BEARR's Small Grants Scheme for their priorities: to promote the employment

of people with disabilities, to share experience and learning among NGOs with relevant aims, and to improve awareness and the engagement of public institutions in addressing the relevant issues.

### Contact

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Chairman of the Board

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## Sewing for Success

**Grantee: Mayuboni Tavono, Tajikistan**

**Project: Training in vocational skills for young people with disabilities**

Mayuboni Tavono has been working with people with disabilities for six years. Our work is focused on the well-being of people with disabilities and their families. One of the main problems for people with disabilities in Tajikistan and in the region is the economic situation of their families. Another issue that has had a direct impact

on people with disabilities and their families is that the young people are excluded from participating in social life because of discrimination and stigma against people with disabilities.

We wanted to break these stereotypes by providing professional skills and job placements, thus helping to improve the economic status of their families. In order to implement this idea, we applied for a BEARR grant in 2018 and are grateful that this was accepted.

First, there was a short sewing course for seven girls with physical and mental disabilities. Then, short-term courses were run for 23 young people with disabilities in Faizabad and Hamadoni districts.

Lastly, all participants were trained in marketing and the preparation of business plans to help business participants become self-employed and gain future profits. Unfortunately, three of the girls with mental disorders were not able to make significant progress in the learning process. But they were pleased that they had found a way to operate within the



community and felt an integral part of the community.

After completing the course, the girls took up folk crafts and knitting on their own account. Some set up businesses in their own homes to help improve their families' standard of living. In addition, the local authorities of Hamadoni district created a point of sale for the girls' products.

### Contact

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More photos on the back page.

# To Be Like Everyone Else!

**Grantee: BelAPDI Mi, Minsk, Belarus**

**Project: 'Mission Accomplished', opportunities, work skills and accompanied employment for young people with disabilities**

Being on a level with everyone else! For anyone with a disability this is what really matters! Most people with a disability are unable to get a proper job. Not because they don't have the right professional qualifications, but because they don't fit easily into the parameters of the modern labour market.

Despite measures taken by the Belarus government, employment prospects for people with disabilities are still not good. There is a real need for efforts to develop assisted working for people with severe disabilities who are not able to work in the conventional sense. Such people need help in: finding suitable workplaces; assessment of their aptitudes; help with getting to work, etc. Even if employment is not a major factor for them in terms of income, it remains important for their socialisation and social adaptation, their social status and self-esteem, and as a way of reducing their social isolation.

To solve the problems of employment for people with disabilities we need to identify mechanisms to make it possible for them to use their abilities and to provide the support they need. We did this in a workshop run by the October District branch of the NGO Belarus Association for Assistance to Children and Young People with Disabilities.

The project covered:

- Social adaptation and rehabilitation with professional training for young people with disabilities, helping to prepare them for living and working independently.
- Professional training and social rehabilitation for employment.
- Work as a form of socialisation.

Under the project 'Mission accomplished' we provided rehabilitation services which showed young people with disabilities how they might find employment. Some youngsters who had been unable to find work for a long time had begun to feel useless. That is why work is so important for their subsequent lives. 22 trainees attended our employment workshop. In all, 32 people were provided with advice and training. Every day they had lectures on gaining new work, social and communications skills, careers advice, and mini seminars on legal information related to employment for people with disabilities.

These events took account of the specifics of the young people's development and particular educational needs. This meant helping them not only with their psychological needs but also their legal problems and to learn the workplace discipline which is so essential to success in finding work. We were helped in the project by people from state organisations as well as students at Minsk University. The success and value of our project can be seen from the fact that we developed a new form of social service, improving inclusivity for people with disabilities in wider society and enabling them to realise their right to work on equal terms with everyone else. We also ensured that the funding for this is included in the

local government budgets of the October and Central Districts of Minsk.

## Contact

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The BEARR Trust Annual Conference, 15 November 2019

## 'Violence against Women and Girls in Eastern Europe and Central Asia'

Gender-based violence - including rape, domestic violence, murder, sexual abuse, early and forced marriage and trafficking - is a profound problem for women and girls across the world.

In countries of the former Soviet Union, political and economic transition have exacerbated many of these forms of violence by removing old social guarantees and creating new risks. The mass experience of poverty across the region, alongside gender inequalities in employment, have made more women economically dependent on men, while difficulties associated with meeting social and familial expectations have pushed many men towards violence.

These tendencies have been further underpinned by conservative and patriarchal currents tapped into by religious leaders and nationalist politicians, which have encouraged a culture of misogyny and male impunity. In this context, promoting the rights of women and girls has been extremely difficult, as feminist arguments are easily framed as western 'liberal' impositions threatening the family and the nation.

This conference seeks to explore current trends and how domestic and international NGOs across the post-Soviet region have worked to further the rights of women and girls in order to protect them from violence of all forms, and the obstacles they have faced in doing so.

There will be speakers from Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, Russia, Tajikistan, and Ukraine.

# BEARR News

## Congratulations to ...

**Jane Ebel**, BEARR Trustee, on her MBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours for services to disabled children and adults in the Republic of Moldova.

Jane has worked in Moldova for the last 10 years on a variety of projects, which included developing a bespoke training package for therapeutic music, with local partners; delivering an EU-funded project on early years inclusive education; and helping to make national sporting events accessible to everyone, regardless of their disability. Jane's next initiative is a Wheelchair Maintenance project, which she hopes will dramatically improve the provision of equipment to people who need it, so that they can lead independent and healthy lives.

Though a fairly new BEARR Trustee, Jane also played a key role in organising the BEARR/ULIM Conference on Migration and Social Change in April this year (see page 5).



**Charlie Walker**, BEARR Trustee, on completing the London Marathon in April in a personal best time of 3 hours 56 minutes. This is Charlie's third marathon, but the first he has run for BEARR. He raised just under £1000 in sponsorship money, which helped fund an additional project under the Small Grants Scheme.



**Neil Hailey**, long-standing volunteer translator, on his hundredth batch of translations for the BEARR website and Bulletin. Neil worked for the UK Government's statutory nature conservation advisors for 30 years, specialising in marine pollution and European environmental policy issues, before becoming a freelance translator in 2013. To thank him for his exceptional service to BEARR, the Trustees presented him with a copy of Sooyong Park's book on the search for the Siberian tiger.



## Welcome to ...

**Sophie Vandyck**, BEARR's new Information and Administration Officer. Sophie graduated in Russian and French from Manchester University, and after two years living and working in Uzbekistan as a primary school teacher took a Master's in Development Studies at SOAS. Her thesis was on sexual and reproductive rights and right to sexual and reproductive health for women in post-Soviet



Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, which involved collecting data on women's personal experiences in these countries and analysing provision of and access to family planning services.

Sophie has also worked on various cultural projects and volunteers regularly at Matchstick Piehouse, a volunteer-led theatre and arts venue in South East London.

Sophie has replaced Tatiana Mordvinova at BEARR. Tanya resigned to take up a post nearer to her home on the south coast. We are very grateful to Tanya for all her good work with BEARR, first as a volunteer and then as a greatly-valued Information Officer, and wish her all the best for her future career. Anna Lukanina-Morgan is continuing to work on BEARR's Small Grants Scheme.

## Warmest thanks to ...

**Leila Carlyle**, who has worked on the layout of the BEARR Newsletter for no less than 17 years.

Leila is bowing out after the current issue to concentrate on matters more closely related to her home in the heel of Italy. All at BEARR will be sad to see her go, but greatly appreciate all the years in which she has helped us through a series of updates and innovations in the Newsletter's format and content.





Photos from Mayuboni Tavono, Tajikistan (see page 13)

## About the BEARR Trust

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

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

We pursue our aims by:

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

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

**Hon Treasurer:** Carolyn Davis

**Information Officers:** Sophie Vandyck, Anna Lukanina-Morgan

**Moscow Rep:** Igor Timoshin

**Volunteers:** Charlotte Bull, Serian Carlyle, Nathan Dampier, Neil Hailey, Jess Hoorda, Sue Judge, Roza Kudabayeva, Antony Lewis, Charlie Lewis, Irena Maryniak, Zoryana Mishchiy, Malcolm Mowat, Sabrina Vashisht

**Newsletter Editor:** Ann Lewis; **layout:** Leila Carlyle

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