



# ISAR ANNUAL REPORT

Initiative for Social Action and Renewal *in Eurasia*

Summer 2002

## ISAR at Work: Supporting Committed Individuals And Local Initiatives in Eurasia

The year 2001 marked the tenth year since ISAR began working on the ground with grassroots activists in the former Soviet Union (FSU). Supporting individuals who try to make change in their communities has been a key part of ISAR's mission since its inception in 1983. The excitement, then as now, has been to discover and encourage people who are willing to tackle problems that others feel they can do nothing about.

Our grants, exchanges, information sharing and training programs over the last decade have supported a wide variety of local initiatives. Whether a band of teachers working with orphaned children in Siberia, a group of disabled townspeople fighting to fence off a radioactive dump site in Kazakhstan, or an ecotourism NGO that organizes young people to clean up ancient cultural sites in Azerbaijan, ISAR grantees address issues they feel passionate about.

Having succeeded with our small grants, many ISAR grantees have gone on to win support from local government and business, build coalitions with like-minded organizations, and become leaders in their communities. Three of the activists ISAR began working with in the early 1990s as board members and grantees, Svet Zabelin and Vera Mischenko from Russia, and Oral Ataniyazova from Karakalpakstan, for instance, have since won Goldman Foundation environmental awards. These awards honor exceptional commitment to environmental protection at the grassroots level. Two other former ISAR grantees, Maria Cherkasova of Russia, and Oleg Derkach of Ukraine, have won Ford Conservation awards, a British prize for environmental protection activity in Europe.

Some highlights of ISAR's activities in 2001 include a January seminar on Alternative Paths to Economic Development that convened NGOs from all around the Caspian Sea, where oil and gas exploitation threatens the environment; a June training exchange bringing US women NGO leaders to Siberian cities to discuss the links between illness and exposure to nuclear radiation; the launch of an environmental grants program in Belarus, one of the most repressive countries in the FSU; and an all-ISAR strategic planning summit in West Virginia that enabled staff members from the nine ISAR offices to come together and plan for the next decade.

We decided this year to turn the summer issue of *ISAR in Focus* into our 2001 Annual Report. Doing so seemed a good way to combine news of our current activities with a report on the financial highlights of the previous year. Inside you will find lists of the institutions and individuals that supported ISAR in 2001 and graphs illustrating how we used the resources they provided. Thank you for your interest in ISAR. Your support, both moral and financial, is an essential part of our success.

Eliza K. Klose, Executive Director

## Initiative for Social Action and Renewal in Eurasia

### ISAR Offices

#### UNITED STATES

1601 Connecticut Ave, NW, Suite 301  
Washington, DC 20009  
202-387-3034 (ph)  
202-667-3291 (fax)  
postmaster@isar.org, www.isar.org

#### AZERBAIJAN

370010 Baku, 24 Jafar Jabbarly St, Apt. 2  
994-12-95-30-37 (ph)  
994-12-94-30-84 (fax)  
ngo@isar-az.org, www.isar-az.org

#### CENTRAL ASIA

480012 Almaty, Kazakhstan, a/ya 24  
7-3272-92-71-88 (ph/fax)  
root@isar.almaty.kz,  
www.isar.org/isar/Central\_Asia.html

465050 Atyrau, Kazakhstan

13 Satpaeva, No. 10  
7-3122-27-06-33 (ph)  
isaratyrau@astel.kz, www.isar.org/isar/atyrau.html

#### RUSSIA

121019 Moscow, G-19, a/ya 210  
7-095-251-76-17 (ph/fax)  
clearh@online.ru, www.isarmos.ru

630004 Novosibirsk-4

a/ya 130  
7-3832-21-89-24 (ph/fax)  
isarsib@mail.cis.ru, http://ecoclub.nsu.ru/isar

690091 Vladivostok, a/ya 91246

7-4232-21-10-96 (ph/fax)  
isarrfe@online.marine.su, www.isarrfe.ru

#### WEST NIS

03150 Kyiv-150, Ukraine, a/ya 447  
380-44-269-8542 (ph/fax)  
isar@isar.kiev.ua, www.ednannia.isar.kiev.ua

220088 Minsk, Belarus, a/ya 89

375-172-23-84-98 (ph)  
ecop@iatp.unibel.by, www.isar.org/isar/belarus.html

### Annual Report Staff

Editor: Tamara Kowalski  
Executive Director: Eliza K. Klose  
Deputy Director: Kate Watters

### ISAR Mission Statement

ISAR's mission is to strengthen the ability of citizens and social change organizations in Eurasia and their colleagues in the US to influence decision-making, advance social justice and promote environmentally sound stewardship of the earth and its resources.

Founded in 1983, ISAR is a nongovernmental organization that operates as an international association of NGOs. Our nine members work together to build civil society, protect the environment and support local NGOs. We share common values, including a belief in transparency, cooperation and mutual respect. These values guide ISAR members as we choose appropriate strategies to address the needs of the diverse communities we serve. ISAR is funded by public and private sources.

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## Women's Exchange Shares "Open Society" With Russia's Closed Nuclear Cities

By Lucy Roberts

In May 2002, ISAR-DC and ISAR-Moscow held the "Women in Grassroots Nuclear Safety Activism Exchange Program" in cities across Russia. The program brought ten US women activists (including a documentary filmmaker) and three US trainers from the field of nuclear safety together with ten of their Russian counterparts. The program was a follow-on initiative to the "Women's Leadership and Nuclear Safety Activism Program," which included an exchange program in the US in October-November 2000 and a series of environmental health seminars in Russia in June 2001. This year's program was designed to build on the success of the first and to forge new channels of nuclear safety activism between Russia and the US.

Each American participant was paired with a Russian nuclear safety activist for the duration of the program. Most of the Russian participants came from one of the country's eleven closed cities, formerly known as "secret cities," which are home to Russia's most high profile nuclear facilities. Their secrecy was so guarded that they do not appear on any Soviet-era maps and Russian citizens are not allowed to pass through city gates without permission. For foreign citizens it is nearly impossible to visit.

Despite a more democratic and open society, an iron curtain of secrecy still shrouds Russia's closed cities. Young people are leaving in droves and the older generation often remains unchallenged in its cold war mentality. Nuclear contamination is viewed as collateral damage and technological development takes priority over production safety. However, the exchange program showed that the grassroots nuclear safety movement in Russia's closed cities is strong. Women activists have shown that they are a vital force in bringing open society to Russia's closed cities and in protecting the lives of their families and the vitality of their communities from environmental contamination.

The exchange began with four days in Moscow meeting with international environmental NGOs and governmental officials from the Russian Parliament and the Russian Ministry of Natural Resources. The American activists then spent four days working with their Russian partners in regional Russian cities. They visited Murmansk, Zlatoust, Ekaterinburg, Muslumovo, Chelyabinsk, and Novosibirsk. Although many of them were not able to visit their Russian partners' homes in nearby closed cities, the Americans experienced Russian culture and gained hands-on experience in Russian

nuclear safety activism during their stay. Some of the highlights of their visits included a tour of a nuclear-powered Barents Sea icebreaker in the Arctic Circle; a visit to a Urals village on the radioactively contaminated Techa River; a meeting with 40 members of the Ekaterinburg "Victims of Chernobyl" organization; a day spent monitoring radiation levels near the Novosibirsk Chemical Plant in Siberia; and, of course, the many dinners, cultural performances, and friendships that are characteristic of Russian hospitality.

The program ended with a four-day conference in the city of Tomsk where the group met at a Soviet-style



Russian and American nuclear safety activists meet with members of the NGO Step Towards in Argayash, Russia.

resort nestled in a birch forest beside the Tom River. Participants took part in seminars as diverse as, "Treating Toxic Exposure with Holistic Medicine" and "Using Media Tools for Advocacy." The activists discussed issues such as environmental justice as a human rights issue, de-alerting nuclear weapons, and the effect of radiation on genetics and the fate of future generations. On their last day in Tomsk, the group designed a Russian-American Charter on Nuclear Issues, which lays out the questions of greatest concern to both nations. The participants hope to use the document in the international arena to promote nuclear safety.

These partnerships will be eligible for an ISAR cooperative grants program that will award three \$10,000 grants to fund joint projects beginning in September 2002. The program was funded by the US Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs and the Trust for Mutual Understanding.

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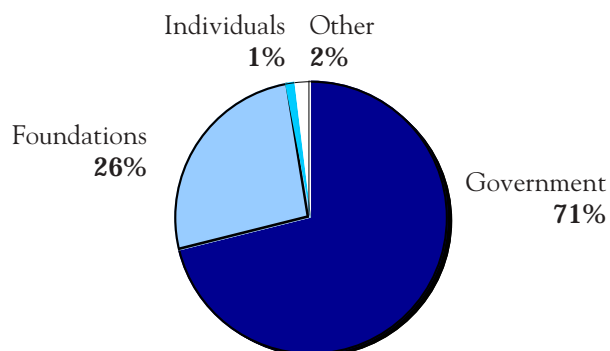
## FINANCIAL REPORT

The information shown here is based on financial data for the year 2001. The total revenue, \$3,896,435, represents an increase of 9.5 percent over ISAR's income in 2000. The increase is due to expanded activities in Azerbaijan and the Caspian region funded by the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Open Society Institute. ISAR also received a large two-year grant from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation to carry out a new environmental small grants program in the Russian Far East. The majority of ISAR's funding (71 percent) comes from US government agencies—USAID and the Department of State—but an increasing percentage comes from private foundations. "Other" revenue includes rental income, bank interest, and membership fees.

ISAR's expenses of \$3,421,665 for 2001 are roughly equal to the expenses for 2000. Thirty-seven percent of the total, or \$1,257,724, was spent on subgrants to nongovernmental organizations in the former Soviet Union. ISAR's grant programs and other activities are currently run out of nine offices, eight based in Eurasia plus the office in Washington, DC. The costs of these programs come to 48 percent of ISAR expenses while administrative, fundraising and PR activities come to 15 percent.

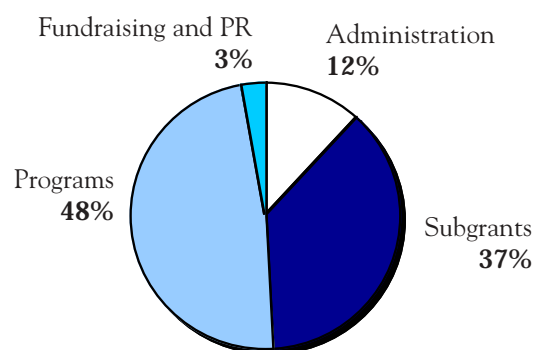
The Miller Group, a DC-based accounting firm that specializes in nonprofit organizations, conducts an annual audit of ISAR's financial records. The audit report for 2001 is available on request.

### Revenue



<b>Government</b>	\$ 2,775,315
<b>Foundations</b>	999,775
<b>Individuals</b>	49,720
<b>Other</b>	<u>71,625</u>
<b>TOTAL REVENUES</b>	<b>\$ 3,896,435</b>

### Expenses



<b>Subgrants</b>	1,257,724
<b>Programs</b>	1,650,691
<b>Fundraising and PR</b>	102,650
<b>Administration</b>	<u>\$ 410,600</u>
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$ 3,421,665</b>

## ISAR 2001 Grant Awards

**ISAR-DC**

12 subgrants to FSU NGOs ..... \$574,573

**ISAR-ALMATY**

91 environmental grants ..... \$111,788

**ISAR-ATYRAU**

16 environmental grants ..... \$19,906

**ISAR-AZERBAIJAN**

123 NGO support grants ..... \$210,224

5 cooperative NGO support grants ..... \$43,309

**ISAR-BELARUS**

35 environmental grants ..... \$50,000

**ISAR-MOSCOW**

36 environmental grants ..... \$72,061

**ISAR-SIBERIA**

43 environmental grants ..... \$24,035

**ISAR-RFE**

81 NGO support grants ..... \$119,694

**ISAR CASPIAN PROGRAM**

5 cooperative environmental grants ..... \$32,134

**TOTAL GRANTS DISTRIBUTED: ..... \$1,257,724**

**TOTAL NUMBER OF GRANTS GIVEN: ..... 447**

**ISAR-WESTNIS/EDNANNIA**

43 environmental grants ..... \$57,316\*

\*ISAR-WestNIS/Ednannia received a direct grant from the C.S. Mott Foundation to run a grant program for environmental NGOs in Ukraine.

### 2002 Success Stories—Russian Far East

ISAR’s environmental grants program in the RFE, which is funded by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, includes a \$700 micro-grant component for new initiative groups. Since its inception in January 2002, the program has made over 35 such grants, including the three projects described below.

Lake Khanka, the largest lake in Primorskiy Krai, and its surrounding wetlands contain 74 species of fish. The water quality in the lake has been degraded in recent years due to industrial and agricultural runoff. Lack of oxygen due to pollution has led to serious fish die-offs during the winter freeze. In an effort to solve the problem, Lake Khanka Zapovednik (nature reserve) staff set up an initiative group and won support from the local administration to call for volunteers from the village of Spassky to help save the fish. Working with students from the town technical and teachers’ college and local high schools, they organized five brigades of 13 to 18 people. Each brigade was assigned a different part of the lake and proceeded to drill holes in the ice large enough to permit oxygen to flow down through the water to the fish below. They then covered the holes with deep layers of leaves and snow to prevent refreezing. Thanks to this concerted effort, no die-offs were reported in Lake Khanka this spring.

A town in Luchegorsk, in the northwestern corner of Primorskiy Krai, is the site of the region’s largest hydro-electric station. The station pumps clouds of particulates and chemical emissions into the air every year. In an effort to boost environmental consciousness, an NGO called First Blossom decided to restore an abandoned six-acre park in the middle of the city. Gaining the support of the city council, local business, school groups and the public, they planned new paths and play equipment, tore up cracked pavement and carted away the debris in preparation for an all-day cleanup. On the day of the cleanup, local businesses provided trucks, the local army division set up a field kitchen to feed volunteers, the city band accompanied the opening ceremonies, and the mayor proudly planted six trees to launch the effort. The reconstruction project, which brought the town together as never before, was widely covered by the local media.

On Sakhalin Island, the Green Patrol aims to protect the threatened forests of Sakhalin. Green Patrol trains groups of young people to monitor the condition of the forests, watch for fires and insect manifestations, plant new cedar trees and tend a cedar nursery. The ISAR grant allowed the leader of the group, a third generation forester, to purchase tools and seeds, print informational brochures, and provide green bandannas and hats for the members of the patrol, enhancing the allure of belonging to the group and advertising its good works.

## ISAR Caravan Follows Caspian Pipeline Route To View Environmental Threats

By Megan Lee

From June 5-22, ISAR staff partnered with two NGOs on its first ever Caspian Caravan. ISAR's Caspian Program, the Sustainable Energy and Economy Network (SEEN) (Washington, DC) and Globus: Center for Environmental-Legal Initiatives (Atyrau, Kazakhstan) conducted a traveling educational campaign on oil extraction, transportation and financing issues along the Caspian Pipeline Consortium (CPC) route. The Caravan traveled for two weeks through western Kazakhstan and southern Russia.

The Caravan held public meetings on environmental and civil society issues related to oil development in the Caspian coastal towns of Aqtau and Atyrau, Kazakhstan, and Astrakhan, Elista and Novorossisk, Russia. These meetings served both as organizing tools for local environmental activists, and as a forum for active dialogue among representatives from local and regional NGOs, government, oil companies and the media. A key issue addressed at each meeting was the involvement of international financial institutions, such as the World Bank and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, in current and prospective extraction projects in the north Caspian. The Caravan participants found that the overarching concern of the communities with which they met was the lack of transparency on the part of oil and gas companies, governmental bodies, and international financial institutions. Communities all along the north Caspian demand greater access to information on the projects affecting their environment and their livelihoods.

The Caspian Caravan also visited major development projects such as the Tengiz oil field and the Caspian Pipeline Consortium's Komsomolsk pumping station and terminal, as well as lesser known World Bank-funded projects such as the Uzen and Sazankurak oil fields in Kazakhstan.

After a final stop at the CPC terminal on the Black Sea coast, three of the Caravan's activists traveled to Budapest, Hungary where they participated in the World Bank's Extractive Industries Review. At the Review, activists from Central and Eastern Europe and the FSU had the opportunity to speak with Bank officials regarding World Bank investment in the gas, oil and mining industries in their respective regions. Participants also presented video testimonials from colleagues and other activists regarding World Bank-financed projects throughout Central and Eastern Europe and the FSU.

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At a fish hatchery in Astrakhan, an employee proudly shows one of the sturgeon they are raising.

## ISAR Exchange Brings Azerbaijani Activists To US for Training

By Lucy Roberts

Five Azerbaijani NGO representatives who work on women's and environmental issues came to the US for two weeks in April 2002 to participate in ISAR's third Azerbaijan partnership and exchange program. The program aims to establish sustainable, long-term partnerships between grassroots organizations in both countries and to provide participants with professional development opportunities applicable to their NGO work in Azerbaijan.

The first week of the program was spent in Washington, DC, where participants took part in a two-day training session on advocacy conducted by Mona Schatz, Professor of Social Work at Colorado State University. They also visited local and international NGOs to learn more about how US groups promote advocacy, women's issues, and environmental programs.

In the second week of the exchange, participants were placed in internships across the US to work in NGOs similar to their own. Azar Garayev of the Azerbaijan Society for the Protection of Animals visited the "International Animal Care Expo" of the International Humane Society in Miami, FL. Afterwards, he worked with Florida Voices for Animals for four days in Tampa.

Aynur Ahmadova from The Psychology Center spent her internship in Pittsfield, MA, at the Berkshire County Kids Place learning about domestic and teen violence prevention programs.

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1601 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 301  
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***(ISAR CARAVAN continued from page 7)***

Interviews and film footage taken during the Caravan of residents living near the Uzen and Sazankurak oil fields were included in the testimonial session.

The Caspian Caravan was funded by the Trust for Mutual Understanding and reflects ISAR's long-term commitment to facilitating dialogue and interaction among sectors, thereby supporting local NGOs as they meet the challenges presented in this complex region.

***(AZERBAIJAN EXCHANGE continued from page 7)***

Firuza Sultan-Zade from Ecosphere went to the Hardbargain Farm (part of the Ann Ferguson Foundation) in Acokeek, MD, to learn about environmental education programs. Yuri Valuyev of Pilgrim went to Seattle, WA, to work with the Earth Day Network to learn more about planning Earth Day events.

Elena Gasumova from AREAT Center for Social Research traveled to Madison, WI, to work with local women leaders, including the Madison League of Women Voters, local businesswomen, and representatives of women's nonprofit social organizations.

As a result of the program, partnerships have been established and communication is ongoing between

groups. The International Humane Society is considering opening an "Animal Care Expo" in the Caucasus. The Ann Ferguson Foundation and Ecosphere are hoping to initiate a river cleanup program similar to programs in the US.

ISAR has been administering the partnership grants program for the past three years with support from the US Agency for International Development.



**Become a Member of ISAR!**

Your tax-deductible membership of \$35 (\$50 for organizations) supports ISAR's programs and entitles you to one year of ISAR's quarterly publications, *Give & Take: A Journal on Civil Society in Eurasia* and *ISAR in Focus*. For more information, contact the membership coordinator at [membership@isar.org](mailto:membership@isar.org) or visit [www.isar.org](http://www.isar.org).